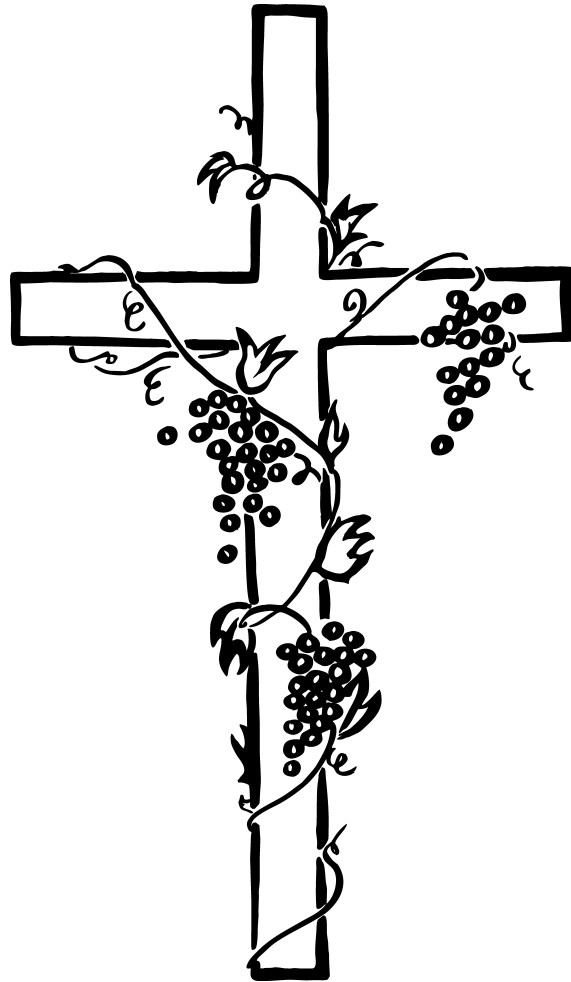


5th Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2021



1812 North Highland Avenue
Clearwater, Florida 33755
Ministers: The People of Grace Lutheran Church

727-446-5026
office@GraceCLW.com
Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

Welcome! This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

This is a special bulletin for Grace Lutheran Church. We have closed the Sanctuary to the general public amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This bulletin is designed to be used at home by anyone who is baptized serving as the Worship Leader. If you use this bulletin for worship, either by itself or alongside our service on YouTube, please fill out the Attendance Record Form on our website: GraceCLW.com

SERVICE OF THE WORD

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Worship Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Congregation: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Worship Leader: Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water is poured into the font as the worship leader gives thanks.

Worship Leader: We thank you, risen Christ, for these waters where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death

vs. 1 & 2



- 1 A - wake, O sleep - er, rise from death, and Christ shall give you light;
- 2 To us on earth he came to bring from sin and fear re - lease,
- 3 There is one bod - y and one hope, one Spir - it and one call,
- 4 Then walk in love as Christ has loved, who died that he might save;
- 5 For us Christ lived, for us he died, and con - quered in the strife.



so learn his love, its length and breadth, its full - ness, depth, and height.
to give the Spir - it's u - ni - ty, the ver - y bond of peace.
one Lord, one faith, and one bap - tism, one God who made us all.
with kind and gen - tle hearts for - give as God in Christ for - gave.
A - wake, a - rise, go forth in faith, and Christ shall give you life.

Text: F. Bland Tucker, 1895–1984

Music: AZMON, Carl G. Gläser, 1784–1829

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APOSTOLIC GREETING

Worship Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Congregation: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Worship Leader: Let us pray together the Prayer of the Day.

Congregation: O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 8:26-40

Introduction to the Lesson: *Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.*

Reader: ²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,

so he does not open his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 22:25-31

The psalm for the day is read responsively.

Reader: ²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!**

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs to the LORD,
who rules over the nations.**

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.**

³¹They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, “The LORD has acted!”

SECOND READING

1 John 4:7-21

Introduction to the Lesson: *We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.*

Reader: ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

GOSPEL LESSON

John 15:1-8

Introduction to the Gospel: *On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to John in the 15th chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: [Jesus said:] ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

After the reading...

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

We Are the Branches

To encourage flowering and fruit production in vines, trees, and shrubs, most of us know that pruning is necessary. This isn't the easiest of work, nor does it make the pruned plant look all that great for a while afterward. Yet often what results after pruning is a plant that is more abundant, beautiful, and healthy than it would have been otherwise.

In our reading today, Jesus makes it very clear that he is the vine, his Father is the vine grower, and we, his disciples, are the branches on which fruit grows. Without the vine and the vine grower, the branches do not exist. Yet, often in our spiritual lives it seems as though we get these roles mixed up. We are wooed by the sense of accomplishment and value that comes from producing results of one kind or another, and we fail to acknowledge the source that makes that “fruit” possible.

However, in today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that our job isn't to produce results; it's to stay connected. “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing,” Jesus says (John 15:5). Jesus is our source and strength; it is only by our connection to Jesus the vine that we the branches bear fruit that will last, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, hope, service, kindness, and patience.

To grow this kind of fruit, Jesus relates how necessary it is for us to be pruned occasionally. In other words, those things that are not of God in our lives have to be rooted out from time to time. The process of pruning isn't always the most enjoyable and can even include a good deal of pain, but it leads to lives that are whole and

abundant. As we abide in Jesus, we are given the strength we need to endure the pruning process. We also experience the peace that comes from knowing that the fruit that will follow is for the glory of God.

SERMON

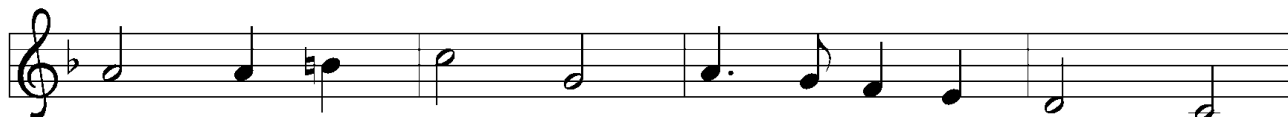
HYMN OF THE DAY

There in God's Garden

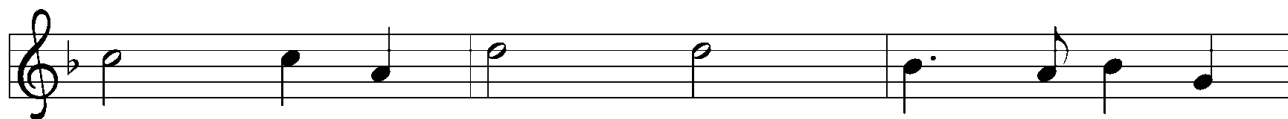
vs. 1 & 2



1 There in God's gar - den stands the Tree of Wis - dom,
 2 Its name is Je - sus, name that says, "Our Sav - ior!"
 3 Thorns not its own are tan - gled in its fo - liage;
 4 See how its branch - es reach to us in wel - come;



whose leaves hold forth the heal - ing of the na - tions:
 There on its branch - es see the scars of suf - f'ring;
 our greed has starved it, our de - spite has choked it.
 hear what the Voice says, "Come to me, ye wea - ry!



Tree of all knowl - edge, Tree of all com -
 see there the ten - drils of our hu - man
 Yet, look! it lives! its grief has not de -
 Give me your sick - ness, give me all your



pas - sion, Tree of all beau - ty.
 self - hood feed on its life - blood.
 stroyed it nor fire con - sumed it.
 sor - row, I will give bless - ing."

Text: Király Imre von Pécselyi, c. 1590–c. 1641; tr. Erik Routley, 1917–1982

Music: SHADES MOUNTAIN, K. Lee Scott, b. 1950

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CREED

Worship Leader: Let us confess our common faith with the ancient words of the Nicene Creed.

**Congregation: We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

A brief silence.

Prayer Leader: God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of creation, may we seek vital connections among all that depends on the earth for life. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: You rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Prayer Leader: You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, or fearful. Provide for the needs of all (*especially* Marc Calhoun, Linda Almond, Barbara Haseley, Duke Tieman, Betty Biddle, Cathi Adams, Michael Morales, Wade Buehler, Gloria Holtzclaw, Betty Daege, Dianne William, Rosemarie & George Smith, Gary Neal, Karen Bates, Rev. Lydia Villanueva and family, Don Eunis, Lorraine Reinhard, Bonnie Redler, Kathy Leotta, Brytt Mathis, Joseph Valentin, Rita Burneik, Bobby Schlegel, Hilda Taylor, George Clark, Jill Grote, Larry Timmons, Carl Stone, Neftali Garcia & family, Susan Gunn, Roy Pruitt, Iris Valentin, Deacon Connie Puls, Joan Keeton, Steve Davis, Rose Marie Piff, Gary Mostrum, Vicki Kennedy, Gail Elder, Valerie Smutko, Jason Meadows, Lisa & Ty Hauschild, Bishop Pedro Suarez, Pastor Courtney Erzkus and family, Ralph Burson, Ellen Duncan, Luanne Sekel, Lorraine Chavez, Pat Fredell, Skylar Favos, Audrey Fisher, the family and friends of Kelly Sullivan, and all those suffering from natural disasters [including all those affected by COVID-19 and severe winter weather], from violence, & terror, and the family & friends of the 570,000+ people in the US & the 3,000,000+ people worldwide who have died from COVID-19). Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Prayer Leader: You gather us with all the saints by the power of your Spirit (*especially with Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria and those in our Memorial Garden*). With them, may our hearts live forever in your keeping. Lord, in your mercy,

Congregation: hear our prayer.

Worship Leader: In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

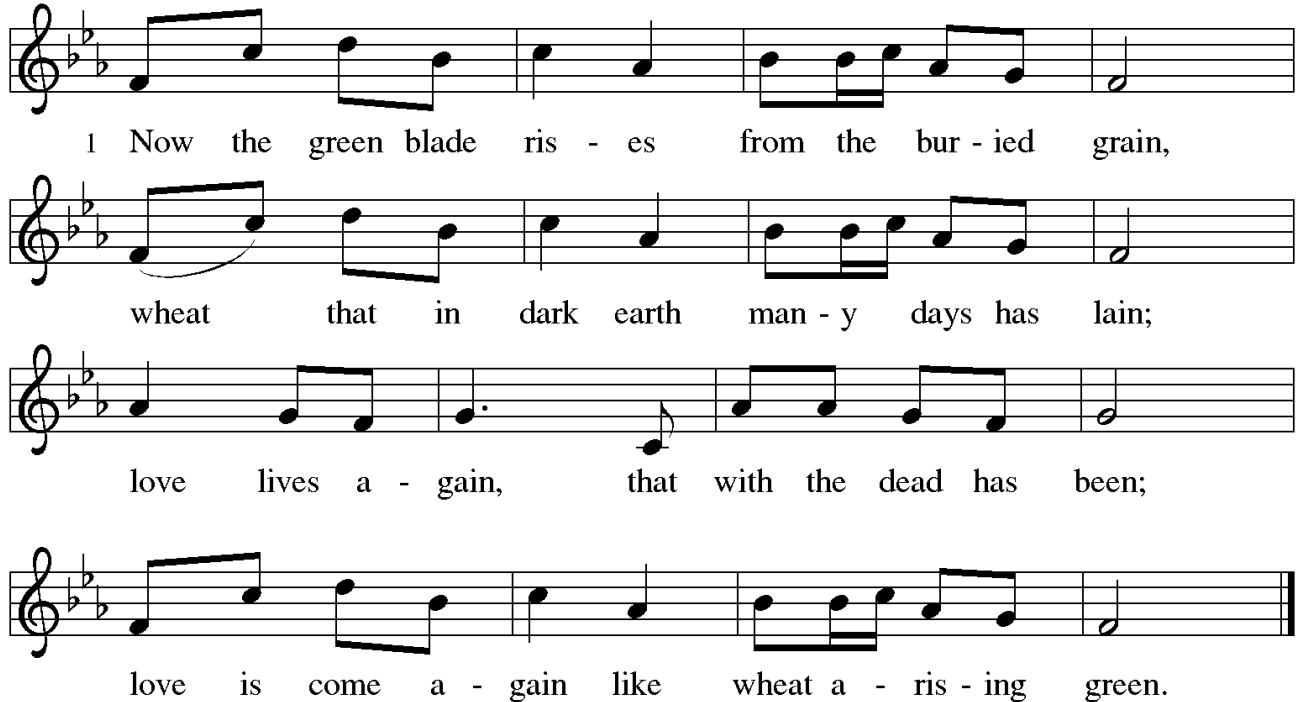
OFFERING

Offerings to the mission and ministry of Grace can be made online at GraceCLW.com (look for the "Donate" button), or by mailing a check to Grace Lutheran Church, 1812

N. Highland Ave. Clearwater FL 33755. Thank you for your continued financial support during these uncertain times. You can also fill out your attendance form on our website.

OFFERTORY

Now the Green Blade Rises vs. 1



1 Now the green blade ris - es from the bur - ied grain,
wheat that in dark earth man - y days has lain;
love lives a - gain, that with the dead has been;
love is come a - gain like wheat a - ris - ing green.

Text: John MacLeod Campbell Crum, 1872–1958
Music: NOËL NOUVELET, French carol
Text from *Oxford Book of Carols*, © Oxford University Press 1928. All rights reserved.

OFFERING PRAYER

Prayer Leader: God of love, you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.

Congregation: Amen.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Worship Leader: Let us pray. Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

Congregation: we give you thanks and praise.

Worship Leader: Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

Congregation: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Worship Leader: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray in the language closest to our hearts.

Congregation: 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

Worship Leader: May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING HYMN

Let All Things Now Living



1 Let all things now liv - ing a song of thanks - giv - ing to
2 God rules all the forc - es: the stars in their cours-es and



God the cre - a - tor tri - um - phant - ly raise,
sun in its or - bit o - be - dient - ly shine;



who fash - ioned and made us, pro - tect - ed and stayed us, who
the hills and the moun - tains, the riv - ers and foun - tains, the



still guides us on to the end of our days.
deeps of the o - cean pro - claim God di - vine.



God's ban - ners are o'er us, God's light goes be -
We too should be voic - ing our love and re -



fore us, a pil - lar of fire shin - ing forth in the night,
joic - ing; with glad ad - o - ra - tion a song let us raise



till shad - ows have van - ished and dark - ness is ban - ished, as
till all things now liv - ing u - nite in thanks - giv - ing: "To



for - ward we trav - el from light in - to light.
God in the high - est, ho - san - na and praise!"

Text: Katherine K. Davis, 1892–1980, alt.
Music: THE ASH GROVE, Welsh folk tune
Text © 1939, 1966 E. C. Schirmer Music Company.

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DISMISSAL

Worship Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Congregation: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Worship Leader: Together we have heard God's Word and joined in prayer, we have given and have been forgiven. Now as this service of worship is ending, this week's service to the world is beginning! Go in peace. Share the Good News. Alleluia!

Congregation: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

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