

August 2, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.
Eleventh Sunday of Pentecost

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Vimary Couvertier Cruz

*If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our
Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.*

PRELUDE *Jesus Loves Even Me* Philip P. Bliss, arr. Melody Bober

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalms* 17)

Leader: Hear us, LORD, our plea is just; listen to our cry. Hear our prayer—it does not rise from
deceitful lips.

ALL: Keep us as the apple of your eye; hide us in the shadow of your wing.

Leader: Let our vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right. We call on you, our
God, for you will answer us; turn your ear to us and hear our prayer.

ALL: Keep us as the apple of your eye; hide us in the shadow of your wing.

Leader: Show us the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take
refuge in you from their foes.

ALL: Keep us as the apple of your eye; hide us in the shadow of your wing.

Leader: As for us, we will be vindicated and will see your face; when we awake, we will be
satisfied with seeing your likeness.

**ALL: Keep us as the apple of your eye; hide us in the shadow of your wing. We worship
you, O God!**

***OPENING HYMN:** “All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly” (Glory to God, 509)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the Romans, Paul asks, “Why, then, does God still find fault? For who can resist
God’s will?” Together let us confess how we have been at fault and resisted God’s will.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

Dear God, you put up with so much from us. Thank you for understanding us! Today we confess that we
have days when all we want to do is fight with you. We see the suffering that plagues the world, and we
blame you. We grieve for loved ones lost, and we blame you. We do not find the answers that we seek,
and we blame you. We feel the brokenness of your Creation, and we blame you. We hurt. We despair. We
fear. And we blame you. Even though you can handle our blame and receive it with love, please forgive us
for wrestling with you instead of partnering with you. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we
pray. Amen.

KYRIE: Glory to God, No. 579 (unison)

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news! God makes known the riches of God's glory for the objects of mercy, which God has prepared beforehand for glory—including us!

ALL: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI (577)

Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

As it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: *(The Apostles' Creed)*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

We Hear God's Word

EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Gracious God, as we turn to your Word for us, may the Spirit of God rest upon us. Help us to be steadfast in our hearing, in our speaking, in our believing, and in our living. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: *Genesis 32:22-31*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Romans 9:19-24*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 14:13-21*

SERMON: Rumble in the Wilderness

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *What the World Needs Now Is Love* Vimary Couvertier Cruz

We Respond in Faith

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(the Great Prayer continues...)

...With your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

...And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

BREAKING THE BREAD AND POURING THE CUP

Leader: The bread of heaven. The cup of the new covenant. The gifts of God for the people of God.

ALL: Let us keep the feast!

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

(All are welcome at the Lord's table. Please hold the bread and the cup when received that we may show unity in Christ by communing together.)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: So many in this world are wrestling with suffering and fear and doubt right now. As the Church, it is upon us to share God's love in this moment. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may do so effectively. If you are here in person, please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Now let us practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

OFFERTORY *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder*

Spiritual, arr. Cindy Berry

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures high and low;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God, in Jesus fully known;

Creator, Word, and Spirit one;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

O God, we dedicate these gifts to you and to your Kingdom, even as we wrestle with you because of our current plight. Give us your Wisdom as we seek to be partners in healing. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

***CLOSING HYMN:** “Canticle of the Turning” (Glory to God, 100)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *A Strong Tower*

Cindy Berry

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* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 8/2:	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM COMMUNION
MONDAY 8/3:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 8/4:	Deacons – 6:30 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 8/5	GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 8/6:	Scripture in the Park 6:30-7:30 PM at Redar Park in Schererville
SATURDAY 8/8:	Cook for Shelter – 1:00 PM AA – 6:30 PM

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **FAITH DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE** We're once again collecting school supplies to support students and teachers in Highland! If you'd like to participate, you're invited to bring a few school supplies to worship on August 9 & 16. If you aren't able to come to worship, supplies can be dropped off Mondays-Thursdays, 8 am to noon, in the collection bin near the church office from August 10-20. If you'd like to help but can't make it to the church building at all, you can mail in a monetary donation marked for school supplies, and we'll do the shopping for you. If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano. Needed school supplies include: Boxes of facial tissue (such as Kleenex) • Disinfectant wipes • Hand sanitizer • #2 pencils • Crayons – box of 24 • washable markers – box of 8 • dry erase markers, low-odor • glue sticks and bottles of glue • highlighters • single subject notebooks, spiral & composition style • wide-ruled loose leaf paper • pocket folders • scissors • colored pencils – box of 12 • pink erasers
- **AUGUST CALENDAR FUNDRAISER** For the month of August, we will be doing a Calendar Fundraiser. A person selects a day to sponsor and donates the amount of the date sponsored. For example, if someone sponsors August 20, they would donate \$20. A copy of the calendar will be available in the narthex and digitally online. There is a limit of two sponsors per day, and it is open to members of the congregation and friends of the church.
- **SCRIPTURE IN THE PARK** Beginning this month, we're offering a special Bible study and discussion opportunity called “Scripture in the Park.” We're going to join together with folks from Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Schererville for 6 weeks of informal Bible study at Redar Park in Schererville. The first “Scripture in the Park” night will be July 9th and will continue on Thursday evenings through August 13, from 6:30-7:30 pm. We meet at the picnic shelter; feel free to bring a Bible, something to drink, and a lawn chair (or you can sit at the picnic tables, whichever is more comfortable). If you have any questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.

- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.
- **GOT SNEAKERS??** The sneakers that we all collect will help raise money to support our church's general fund AND will help our environment by keeping sneakers out of landfills. Bring the sneakers (athletic shoes only) to the church and put them in one of the blue bins...either by Door D (inside) or in the narthex.

Prayer List

Anthony
 Brady Vanes
 George Griner
 Guy Hendricks
 Bill and Anettia Holmes
 David Markley
 David Kingen
 Diana and Ray Mendoza
 Janet Orem
 Cindy Waltz and Sister
 Yvonne Suroviak
 Georgette and Garry Sknerski
 Jakob Holden
 Denise Matthys
 Jan Oprea
 Florance Cody
 Kathy & Chuck Pumnea
 The Windstrups
 Rick Parker
 Gary Everhart
 Darlene O'Brien
 Doug & Sue Matthews
 Janet Terpstra
 Glen Nahler
 Tom
 David Hamblin
 Jana Tolley
 Larry & Bonnie Perryman

Delta Rose
 Winnie Owen
 Breeanne
 Mom Bechtler
 Marian Clayton
 Ella P
 Rita Stronczek
 Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon
 Edna Cruz
 Charlie
 Jerry & Rena Martinez
 Tyler Gall
 Luana Sulkowski
 Sonny Buono
 Tammy
 Mike Kelly
 Sue Heth
 Oscar Ochoa
 Jean and Clara
 Dave Shelborne
 Kali Rosalia
 Wendy
 Jessica S
 Shirley McKnight
 Renee Williams

Genesis 32:22-31

22 The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. 24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." 31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

Romans 9:19-24

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why then does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" ²⁰ But who indeed are you, a human, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction, ²³ and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the gentiles?

Matthew 14:13-21

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. **14** When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. **15** When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." **16** Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." **17** They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." **18** And he said, "Bring them here to me." **19** Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. **20** And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. **21** And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Rumble in the Wilderness

Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17; Romans 9:19-24; Matthew 14:13-21

Whenever I go to different parts of the world, I am consistently amazed by the pervasiveness of a particular American export, or should I say ex-sport: WWE, World Wrestling Entertainment. Somehow John Cena, Stone Cold Steve Austin, The Undertaker, Triple H, and The Rock have attained a celebrity status that goes far beyond this country and somehow that goes beyond the reputation of almost any other type of celebrity you can think of—and that somehow goes beyond the 90s and early 2000s when they were actually still in the ring. Trust me, I am dumbstruck every time I go somewhere and have children ask me who my favorite professional wrestler is. My knowledge is admittedly very lacking, but thankfully I have heard John Cena's name enough in different contexts to know his widespread fame and select him. He may be well past his prime, but he has left a lasting impression! And I learned my lesson long ago that there is no point in my trying to emphasize that it is the *Entertainment* rather than the so-called *Wrestling* that WWE is focused on and that there is a good reason that so many professional wrestlers end up being actors on the big screen. I know that some of

you went to see *Moana* recently, and Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson as Maui is a prime example! Oh well, what can I say (*except “You’re welcome!”*), there are much bigger things out there for me to worry about!

In a world so stuffed to bursting with violence and toxic masculinity (well, violence *caused by* toxic masculinity), I suppose that I should not be so surprised by the popularity of professional wrestling—no matter how disturbed I am by it. The more I reflect on it, though, the more I am convinced that it is about something more than just cheap violent thrills. To some extent, this obsession points to a primal need within us humans to actually embody the conflicts *within* ourselves and *among* ourselves through processes of grappling and struggling. The ethical dilemmas, the existential questions, the reality of suffering, and the feelings of grief and anger and guilt and fear that so frequently fill our minds and spirits—all of these things beg for catharsis, for embodied release. These things that we so aptly *wrestle* with in our minds and souls, oftentimes in the dead of night when everything is turned off except for the anxieties of our brains—sometimes I wonder if it would be easier if we could personify them and have it out with them in a good ole wrestling match! Just show up, grapple it out, and be done with it.

Even though those professional wrestlers I named are indeed way past their primes, none of them is nearly as ancient as perhaps the best wrestler there ever was: Jacob, son of Isaac and Rebekah, grandson of Abraham and Sarah. He started wrestling in his mother’s womb, initiating a conflict with his twin brother Esau that would rattle his mind and spirit for much of his life. Over the past couple of weeks, we have learned that as a young man he switched from physical aggression to passive aggression, deceit, and trickery. His mistreatment of his brother led to guilt, fear, and a need to flee. His misdeeds finally caught up with him, though, and he had to face down his demons in order to come face to face with his brother as an adult. Two weeks ago we learned of his remarkable dream—that two-way ladder between heaven and earth showing that God was nearby and urging Jacob to choose to draw nearer to God. This week we learn that God actually put that ladder to use, so to say, and came down to pay Jacob another visit in the night.

It was while Jacob was on his journey to meet Esau, and he had just sent his family and all of his possessions across a creek called Jabbok. Perhaps sensing that something momentous was to happen there, Jacob stayed behind for the night. And suddenly a man was there wrestling with him! They wrestled all night, with neither getting the upper hand. There was no winner. This mysterious wrestler ended up bopping Jacob on the hip, throwing it out of wack, but Jacob refused to let go until this mysterious wrestler blessed him. A blessing! Not exactly the trophy one would expect from a wrestling match, huh? Well, there it was. And it turned out to be a brilliant request after all, for this mysterious wrestler turned out to be none other than the great God of all the cosmos! This is why I call Jacob the best wrestler there ever was, because he wrestled with God and lived to tell the tale—with a blessing and a bum hip to show for it!

Well, folks, you can’t get much nearer to God than that! I am sure that most of us like to envision nearness to God as a joyful scene, filled with rapture and peace, much like that of Jacob’s ladder. But if we are truly honest with ourselves, I imagine that most of us would have to admit that there are times in our lives when our nearness to God actually takes the form of wrestling. We want to take our pain and anger and fear and guilt and grief and put it squarely on God, who we believe is supposed to be in charge of everything and is supposed to be all good—so how could God let bad things happen?! We want to release all our rage and rumble and roll around in the dirt. We want to climb that ladder and pounce upon God with our existential crises and our broken hearts. Sometimes we may even want to grab that ladder, fold it up, and take a swing. Ok, ok, I know I am going off into the performative absurd, but hey, we are using professional wrestling as our inspiration! The point is, we need catharsis. We need to acknowledge all the hard stuff and express all the hard stuff and confront our creator with all the hard stuff and, hopefully, catch a blessing in there somewhere—perhaps a blessing of understanding or a blessing of being understood or a blessing of healing or a blessing of hope that maybe things will change.

Friends, I’ve got news for you. God understands this impulse to rumble in the wilderness, and God can handle it! Heck, I think God even welcomes it—for it is often in these moments that we are most honest with ourselves and most honest with God. Why else would God come down that ladder and engage Jacob in such a way? God knew that Jacob had all of this guilt and anxiety and fear and pain and sorrow and needed to do something about it. And like a parent with a toddler in tantrum, God was ready to wrap him up in loving arms and create a safe space for raw release—and of course take a few hits in the process. And God is ready to wrap us up in loving arms, even when we are punching and kicking, especially when we are punching and kicking.

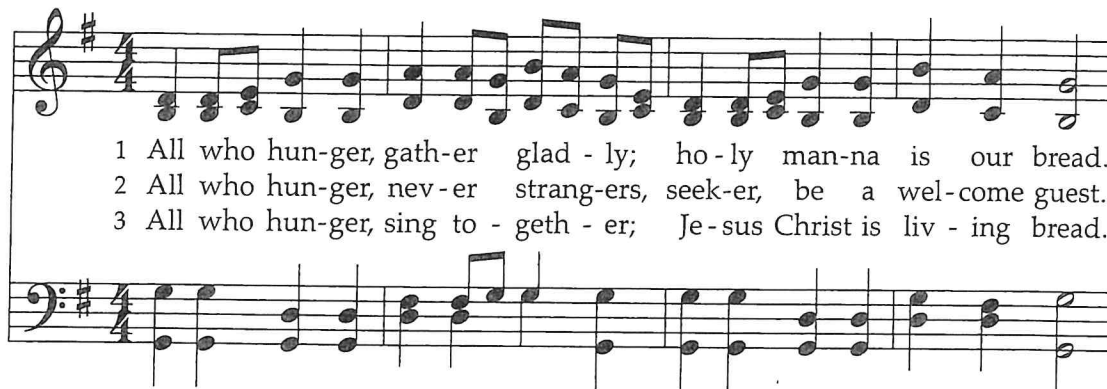
God doesn't just meet us in our good times, our mountaintop experiences, the times when we are most likely to climb the ladder and do our part in drawing near to God. God also comes down that ladder and meets us in the wilderness when we are at our lowest. God meets us where we are, wherever that may be. And God gives us what we need, even if what we need is a knock down, drag out wrestling match! Now let me be clear, that doesn't mean that everything will be resolved. I think it is hugely significant that Jacob's match with God was a draw. There wasn't complete resolution then, nor will we ever have complete resolution to our own existential crises until we have reached the end of all things and are basking in the full presence of God in full glory. But there can be release, and there can be healing.

My God, what wondrous love is this! God wants us to go to God with our deepest struggles and have it out, even if that means a good ole-fashioned rumble in the wilderness! I don't know about all of you, but I often find myself in need of a rumble in the wilderness these days! I need to wrestle with doubt and fear and big questions for God. Why do you allow people to hate each other so, to hurt each other so? Why do the poor suffer so much when there is so much abundance in your creation? Why don't the powerful have to face justice for this suffering of the poor? Why are so many of your children confusing your kingdom with empire, running away from Christ and into the arms of Caesar? Will this world still be around for our grandchildren...or even for our children? And the questions closer to the heart. Why this loss? Why this failure? Why this diagnosis? Why this pain? And maybe sometimes even the most basic and vulnerable of questions—Are you really there, God? I'm sure you have some of your own questions as well!

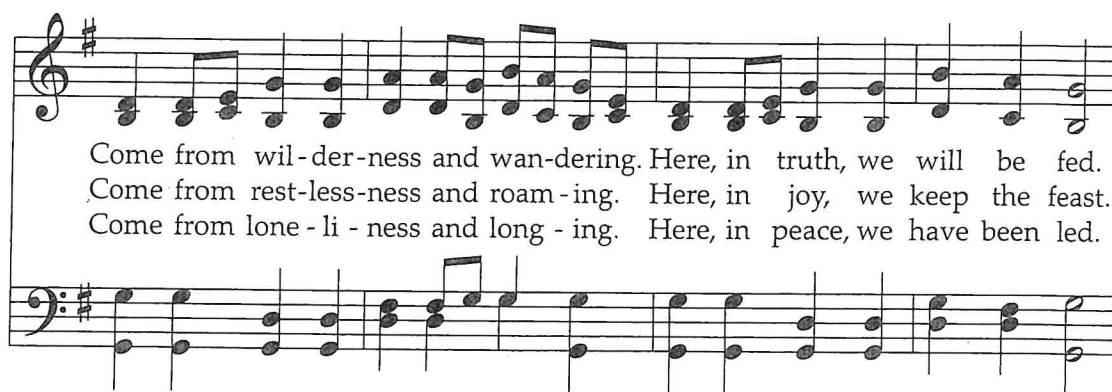
Oh yes, we must take these to the wilderness. Remember, in the Bible the wilderness is a space of profound both/and-ness. It is both a physical place and a spiritual plane. It is space of great struggle and of great growth. It is a space of getting hopelessly lost and of finding oneself. It is a space of uncontrolled chaos and of the deepest peace. It is a space of hurt and of healing. It is a space of barren isolation and of encountering God, of encountering Love.

So let us go to the wilderness with our bewilderment at the brokenness of the world today. Let us go with our questions and tears and rage and fears. Let us go in the honesty of our guilt and in the sincerity of our sorrow. Let us go in the fullness of who we are—open and vulnerable. Let's get ready to rumble! And in doing so, let us find God, grab on, and not let go. I can guarantee you, God never lost us and God will never let go of us! Such is the power of God's profound love for us—and that is exactly what the world needs now!

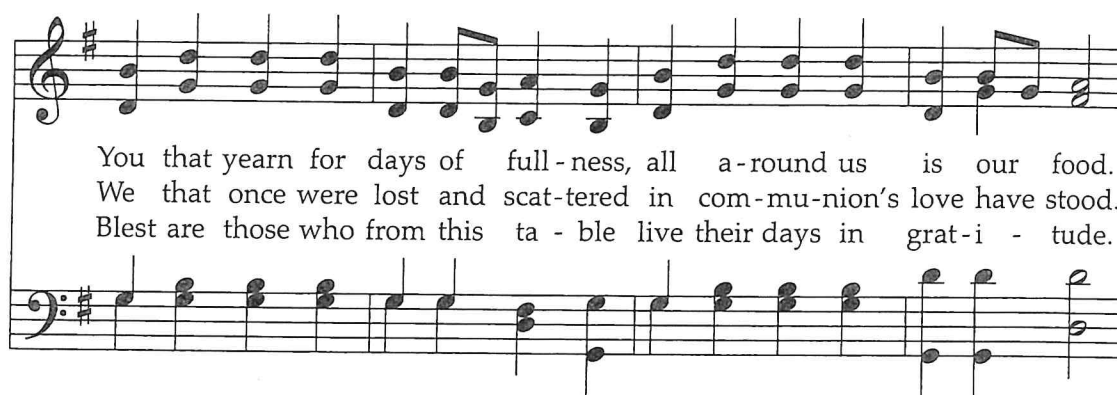
All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly 509



1 All who hun-ger, gath-er glad - ly; ho - ly man-na is our bread.
 2 All who hun-ger, nev-er strang-ers, seek-er, be a wel-come guest.
 3 All who hun-ger, sing to - geth - er; Je - sus Christ is liv - ing bread.



Come from wil-der-ness and wan-dering. Here, in truth, we will be fed.
 Come from rest-less-ness and roam-ing. Here, in joy, we keep the feast.
 Come from lone - li - ness and long - ing. Here, in peace, we have been led.



You that yearn for days of full-ness, all a-round us is our food.
 We that once were lost and scat-tered in com-mu-nion's love have stood.
 Blest are those who from this ta - ble live their days in grat-i - tude.



Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.

100 My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

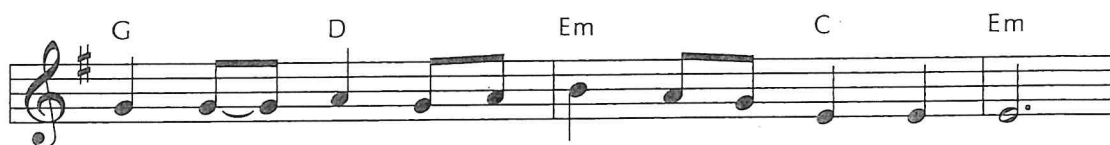
Canticle of the Turning



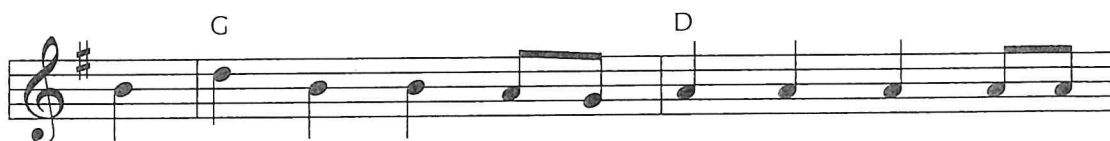
1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2 Though I am small, my God, my all, you
 3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a
 4 Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 work great things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



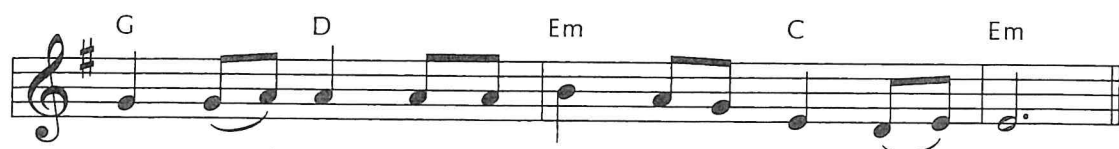
won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
 jus - tice tears ev - ery ty - rant from his throne.
 liv - er us from the con - quer-or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 The hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the

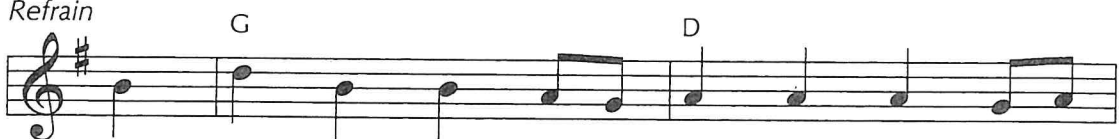


weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread; ev - ery
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be

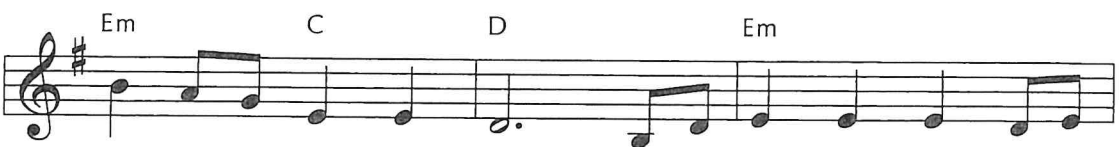


name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

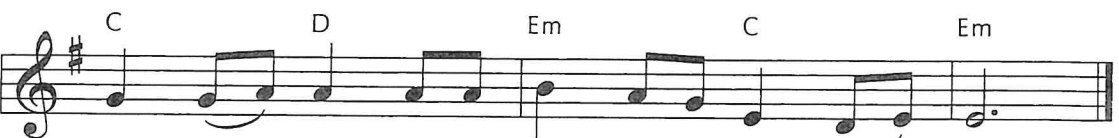
Refrain



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the



fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the



dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

PERSEVERING *toward* WHOLENESS

The 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, addressed constitutional governance, racial justice, gender justice, denominational finances and the direction of the church, laying groundwork for work continuing through the next assembly.

Co-moderators elected, GA228 to be held in Puerto Rico

Commissioners elected the **Rev. Marta Pumroy-Cordero**, border ministry coordinator for the Tres Rios Border Foundation in Tres Rios Presbytery, and the **Rev. Dr. Kristopher D. Schondelmeyer**, pastor and head of staff at First Presbyterian Church in Davenport, Iowa, as co-moderators. They will preside at GA228, June 11-22, 2028, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Commissioners also **approved full, in-person assemblies**, including an exhibit hall, beginning in 2030.

Budget and per capita

Commissioners approved a **balanced \$188.4 million unified budget** for Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL &W) and the A Corporation for the 2027–2028 biennium, about \$5.8 million more than the previous budget: \$90.45 million for 2027 and \$97.92 million for 2028. Per capita rates were set at \$13.04 in 2027 and \$12.72 in 2028.

General Assembly Relationships

The GAR Committee approved the new Organization for Mission, the structure for the General Assembly as the denomination's highest council, and **established PL&W** and its governing board.

Israel/Palestine

Commissioners approved RIW-04, declaring that the **Israeli government has violated international law** prohibiting genocide in its war in Gaza. As amended, RIW-04 directs the denomination's Office of Public

Witness to advocate against U.S. military sales to Israel and purchases from Israel. It also encourages members to avoid products from Israeli companies linked to violations of international law.

Constitutional interpretation, missiology, and mission co-worker dismissals

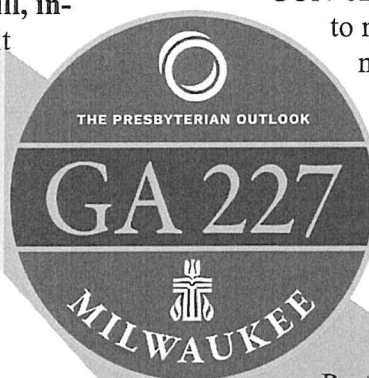
Following testimony on staff dismissals during **World Mission's closure**, the assembly approved CON-02, directing PL&W and the A Corporation to revise employment policies to prohibit nondisclosure covenants for employees, with a report due to the 2028 assembly. RIW-01 calls for review of the processes that terminated mission co-worker positions and World Mission. RIW-02 directs the development of a new missiological statement for global engagement.

Pastors will now be required to complete **boundary and abuse-prevention training** at least every three years. An overture to remove the Board of Pensions' medical coverage requirements was rejected.

Commissioners referred CON-10, which seeks an authoritative interpretation of monogamy, for discussion within the theological framework proposed in GEN-09, "Beyond Changing Families."

Gender and Sexuality Justice

The Constitutional Interpretation Committee **rejected a call for a special study of the Olympia Overture amendments**, citing related proposals GEN-06 and GEN-09. GEN-06 directs the development



of a mechanism that would allow congregations to indicate their openness and readiness to call an LGBTQIA+ candidate on their Ministry Discernment Profiles. Candidates would be allowed to view congregational responses. GEN-09, “Beyond Changing Families: Flourishing Relationships and Belonging,” seeks a theological framework and a study guide on human sexuality and gender that reflect the PC(USA)’s commitment to full inclusion.

The assembly reaffirmed support for **access to medically necessary gender-affirming healthcare** and approved development of a survey collecting non-identifying information about sexual misconduct in church settings.

Climate and Environmental Justice

The Climate Justice Committee approved CLJ-02, “Changing Course for a Green Future,” **directing divestment from more than 50 companies** by 2030 and barring new investments in them. All CLJ items were placed on the consent agenda, including a call for education on regenerative farming and prioritizing responses to the climate crisis.

White Christian nationalism

Commissioners voted overwhelmingly to declare White Christian nationalism and similar ideologies “**a theological error**” incompatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ; language changes in the *Book of Order* require presbytery ratification. Commissioners rejected an amendment that would have removed references to White Christian nationalism from the Special Committee on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Race report.

Racial justice

The Racial Justice Committee advanced several recommendations **strengthening the denomination’s**

anti-racism work, including RAC-04, “The Report from the Special Committee on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on Race,” directing “PL&W to create a tracking system that displays the progress/ completion of all GA business... related to race, racism, and White supremacy ...”

RAC-01 calls for PC(USA) entities to report to the 228th GA on implementation of RGJ-13, the 2022 Report from the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force. RAC-03, the “Resolution on Liberia Project 180,” explores establishing theological learning and repair, and developing **acknowledgment and apology for Presbyterian involvement** in and support of the American Colonization Society and its lasting effects on Indigenous Liberians.

Ordered ministry

The Theological Education and Ordination Committee approved changes **modernizing preparation for ministry** while preserving Presbyterian ordination standards. ORD-02 clarifies that ministry preparation in G-2.06 and G-2.07 of the *Book of Order* applies to those training for the ministry of Word and Sacrament; it requires a two-thirds presbytery vote. ORD-03, addressing collaborative ministry teams, was approved; ORD-04, seeking removal of the time-of-service requirement for ruling elders in mid council roles, was not.

A new confession

A newly appointed special committee will continue **considering a new confession**. The draft seeks to articulate Christian faith in response to contemporary challenges including racism, economic inequality, environmental degradation, violence and political polarization.

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