

July 20, 2025 + 10:30 A.M.  
Seventh Sunday of Pentecost

**We Join in Worship**

*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.*

Liturgist: Hunter Balczo

**PRELUDE** *Morning Has Broken*

Traditional Gaelic Melody, arr. Martha Mier

**WELCOME**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

**\* CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalm 138*)

Leader: We give you thanks, O LORD, with our whole hearts; before the gods we sing your praise;  
we bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast  
love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above  
everything.

**ALL: On the day we called, you answered us, you increased our strength of soul.**

Leader: All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your  
mouth. They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

**ALL: For though the LORD is high, the LORD regards the lowly; but the LORD perceives  
the haughty from far away.**

Leader: Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us against the wrath of our  
enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers us.

**ALL: The LORD will fulfill the LORD's purpose for us; your steadfast love, O LORD,  
endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands. Let us worship the LORD!**

**\*OPENING HYMN:** "All Creatures of Our God and King" (455)

**INVITATION TO CONFESSION:**

Leader: Paul writes, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in  
him, rooted and built up in him." Together let us confess the ways that we have moved away  
from these roots.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (unison)

**O God who gives us courage, we come before you with confession on our lips and repentance in our  
hearts. We confess that all too often we live without boldness in our faith. We see injustices happening  
and close our eyes. We hear dangerous lies spoken and close our ears. We witness the suffering of the  
most vulnerable and close our hearts. In this, we fail to remember that we are rooted in a tradition of  
boldness and courage. We forget that we are called to boldness and courage as we live the Gospel.  
Forgive us, O God. Help us to do better. In the beautiful name of Jesus Christ our liberator 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! In Jesus the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness and boldness in him.

**ALL:** **Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!**

#### **GLORIA PATRI** (unison, 577)

**Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and 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** (from *The Theological Declaration of Barmen*)

**Leader:** The Christian Church is the congregation of the brethren in which Jesus Christ acts presently as the Lord in Word and Sacrament through the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** **As the Church of pardoned sinners, we have to testify in the midst of a sinful world, with faith as with obedience, with our message as with our order, that we belong solely to Christ, and that we live and want to live solely from his comfort and from his direction in the expectation of his appearance.**

<b>We Hear God's Word</b>
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#### **EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES**

#### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**God of power and grace, fill us with the wisdom of your word and the understanding of your Spirit so that we may be your church: a people with dreams and visions at work in all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:** *Genesis 18:1-10a*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Colossians 2:6-10*

**LESSON FROM ACTS:** *Acts 6:8-7:2a*

**SERMON:** Beautiful Boldness

**MUSICAL MEDITATION:** *For The Beauty Of The Earth* Conrad Kocher, arr. Carol Tournquist

<b>We Respond in Faith</b>
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#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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.**

## OFFERING INVITATION

We are called to live out the Gospel with boldness, full of grace and power. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may be effective in sharing the Good News. If you have not already done so, 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. Let us reflect on stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

**OFFERTORY**      *In The Garden*

C. Austin Miles, arr. Martha Mier

### \* 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 who gives us courage, we dedicate this offering to you and to your Good News. Give us boldness and fill us with grace and power as we use it in your name. In the name of Jesus Christ our liberator we pray. Amen.**

### \*CLOSING HYMN "God of Grace and God of Glory" (420)

<b>We Go Into the World</b>
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## BENEDICTION

**POSTLUDE** *Come, Thou Fount Of Every Blessing* Traditional American Melody. arr. Carol Tournquist

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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.

<b>Life of the Church</b>
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### PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 7/20:	Outdoor Worship – 10:30 AM
MONDAY 7/21:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 7/22:	Prayer Shawl – 1:00 PM Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) Session – 6:30 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 7/23:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 7/24:	Scripture in the Park 6:30-7:30 PM Redar Park, Schererville
SATURDAY 7/26:	Sackurday – 12:00 PM
SUNDAY 7/27:	Salad Sale

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **“SCRIPTURE IN THE PARK”** is going to be a 6-week informal Bible study group that will meet from 6:30-7:30 pm on Thursday evenings from July 10 to August 14. Our first meeting will be at Redar Park in Schererville (217 Gregory St, Schererville, IN), at the picnic shelter. “Scripture in the Park” will be a combined group of folks from our church and Immanuel Presbyterian Church. Bring a Bible and a water bottle, and join us for great discussion and wonderful friends new and old! If you have any questions, please contact Heather Casiano.
- **SIGN UP TO HOST FELLOWSHIP WITH LIGHT REFRESHMENTS IN JULY AND AUGUST:** Our ministries and committees have been doing a fantastic job of hosting fellowship over the past many months. Let’s give them a break in July and August! The sign up board is in the Fellowship Hall. Snacks do not have to be elaborate!
- **CALLING ALL CRAFTERS** The FPCH crafters will be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month from 1pm to 3pm in the meeting room upstairs. We will **NOT** meet on July 23, so the next meeting will be on August 13. All are welcome to come! Please join us!
- **BUILDING USE FORMS** Just a quick reminder that for the safety and security of everyone using our building, we need to have building use request forms filled out by both members and non-members whenever they use any area of the building outside of regular church activity functions.
- **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?** We are still participating in the Got Sneakers Fundraiser where there is nothing to buy or sell; all we need is your support and your gently worn, used, or new sneakers! Blue bins are located in the narthex, and inside and outside DOOR D by the office. Every pair counts!

## Prayer List

Anthony  
Brady Vanes  
George Griner  
Guy Hendricks  
Bill and Anettia Holmes  
David Markley  
Pat and David Kingen  
Diana and Ray Mendoza  
Janet Orem  
Cindy Waltz and Sister  
Yvonne Suroviak  
Georgette Sknerski  
Jakob Holden  
Denise Matthys  
Jan Oprea  
Florance Cody  
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea  
Laura Buono Domsic  
The Windstrups  
Rick Parker  
Gary Everhart  
Caroline Studer  
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  
Victor  
Marian Clayton  
Ella P  
Edie Delgano  
Melissa J.  
Rita Stronczek  
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon  
OGB  
Edna Cruz  
Katie  
Charlie  
Jerry & Rena Martinez  
George  
Dustin  
Noreen  
Kim  
Jessica  
Nicole  
Greg  
Pastor Jane  
Mary Ellen Edeus  
Jane and David  
Suzanne  
Jalen  
Flora R.  
Tyler Gall  
Dustin  
Phil  
Luana Sulkowski  
Mike Kelly  
Fred

**Genesis 18:1-10a**

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them and bowed down to the ground. <sup>3</sup> He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." <sup>7</sup> Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. <sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." <sup>10</sup> Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son."

**Colossians 2:6-10**

<sup>6</sup> As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to walk in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

<sup>8</sup> Watch out that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental principles of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.

**Acts 6:8-7:2a**

<sup>8</sup> Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. <sup>10</sup> But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. <sup>11</sup> Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." <sup>12</sup> They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. <sup>13</sup> They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law, <sup>14</sup> for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." <sup>15</sup> And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

<sup>7</sup> Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" <sup>2</sup> And Stephen replied.

## Beautiful Boldness

*Genesis 18:1-10a; Colossians 2:6-10; Acts 6:8-7:2a*

Last week we learned about the boldness of Peter and John as they stood trial before the same people who had convicted and killed Jesus. They called upon that beautiful name even when threatened and commanded not to. In proclaiming the name of Jesus, they proclaimed the Resurrection, they proclaimed healing, and they proclaimed love. And in doing so, they transformed the hearts of the crowd that had called for the crucifixion of the one who bore that name.

As a result of their dedicated work in the name of Jesus, the number of disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests even joined them. One of them, a deacon named Stephen, did great wonders and signs among the people. He is described as being full of grace and power. The Greek here is stunning beautiful: Στέφανος δὲ πλήρης χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως. It can best be translated like this: Stephen, full to overflowing with a divine grace and an inherent power rooted in his very nature or being. Have you ever met somebody who simply exudes the joy of the Gospel in a way that seems unstoppable and uncontainable? That's Stephen to a T.

And of course, like Jesus before him, he terrified the powers and principalities. He shook the foundations of their unjust systems. Those signs and wonders were supposed to have stopped with the execution of Jesus of Nazareth! Sure Peter and John and those other pesky apostles had been able to do some healing, but they had been in direct contact with Jesus. This Stephen was a whole nother story. He had never made contact with the so-called King of the Jews. He was an upstart deacon, simply selected from the masses. He was evidence that the power of Jesus Christ could spread to the everyday people. He was evidence that the Holy Spirit was truly alive—not just some story that could be explained away as drunkenness. He was evidence that the splitting of the curtain had not just been symbolic, that the living God was alive out among the people. He was evidence that these gatekeepers could not longer lock the doors or build the walls or control access to Shekinah, the glory of God.

And so, they conspired once again to put a stop to things. This seems absurd, given that the movement of the Holy Spirit is unstoppable. But hey, desperate times call for desperate measures. Once again they tried to level the charge of blasphemy, just as they had with Jesus. Specifically, they claimed that Stephen was besmirching the great ancestor Moses and the law that he received from Jehovah his God. They argued that he was trying to destroy the Temple and to change the customs that Moses had handed to the Israelites by calling upon the name of Jesus and sharing the Good News that God was with the people.

The entire council looked intently at him. They gazed upon this lowly deacon, and as the text claims, they saw the face of an angel. Take a moment to envision Stephen with me as he stands up.

Look at this common human being who responded to the call to be a deacon out among his fellow human beings. Look at his clothes, dirtied by the dust. Look at his feet, calloused from his persistent trudging through those streets. Look at his frame, bent by hard work. Look at his hands that have touched so many with healing. Look at his face, the face of an angel. Look at his grace. Look at his power. Watch as he stands courageously before the death tribunal. Listen as he speaks the truth boldly, even with the knowledge that this will surely not end well for him, that this most likely will end with his execution.

The high priest asks him, “Are these things so, are these accusations true?” Full to overflowing with a divine grace and an inherent power rooted in his very being, he **replies**.

He tells the people of their history. He reminds them of where they come from. He prompts them to remember what they have been through together as a people. I won't read you the lengthy speech he gives, though I encourage you to read chapter 7 verses 2 through 53 on your own time. Right now I'll summarize. He retells the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, and Solomon. He speaks of the Israelites as a whole, reminding them that God's chosen people were always the marginalized and outcast—the refugees and immigrants, the enslaved people and laborers. He speaks of Moses's prophecy that God would raise up a prophet among them who would be both king and liberator.



Most importantly, though, he speaks of God's presence and activity through it all. He speaks of God cutting a covenant with Abraham, of God rescuing and empowering Joseph, of God encountering Moses in the burning bush and promising to deliver the people, of God being heartbroken when the people made the golden calf, of God moving with the people in the tabernacle, of God protecting the people on their journey to Palestine. Throughout it all, he speaks of *God* speaking, ending with these words about the possibility of being contained by a human-made and human-controlled temple: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?"

And so, by providing the context of history, Stephen reminded the people that God had always been out among them—guiding them, urging them forward, protecting them, feeling their pain, listening to them, loving them. He didn't belittle the significance of the temple as a symbol and source of strength. He contextualized the temple. It was a way for the people to honor God. It was not a thing to keep God away from the people. And so God inhabited the temple of a human body and walked among the people. And so God was breathed into the very lungs of the people, filling them with grace and power.

Stephen was not blaspheming the law. Stephen was teaching the truth of the law. He was explaining to the people that the law was not meant to become a stumbling block to trip people up and exclude them, that the law was not meant to create a hierarchy of power, that the law was not meant to be weaponized and cause harm. NO, the law was always an expression of God's love. And the law was never stagnant or stuck. As he made clear, God was always present and moving among the people. God was always speaking to the people. God was always listening to the people. God was always loving the people.

And so, when God became one of the people, he brought the law to its final fulfillment. Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh, dwelt among them and came to know the fullness of the human experience—the struggles and brokenness, the sorrow and pain, the strength and resilience, the joy and hope. He came to understand our vast potential and our limited scope. He came to comprehend the complexity of our thoughts and feelings and thus the deep need we have for the simplicity of unconditional, unmerited, unstoppable love. And so he simplified and clarified the law so that it would be available and comprehensible to all people: God is with you always, and God is love. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love! Love! Love! Love! Love! Stephen was not blaspheming the law. He was sealing the truth of it upon their hearts.

Full of grace and power, he stood up in the full knowledge that he may not survive the day. And yet he chose courage. He chose boldness. All for the sake of love. Friends, this grace and power was not exclusive to Stephen. We will see it over and over again throughout the book of *Acts*. We *have* seen it over and over again in people like Simon Peter's mother-in-law, like Mary Magdalene, like Mary mother of Jesus, like John the Baptist, like the sung and unsung heroes of the Hebrew Bible. And we can see it as we look across the world today.

Hear the good news! God is still living and breathing and moving in our midst! Jesus Christ is still watching and listening and interceding and waiting for the perfect day to come back for us. The Holy Spirit is still blowing through each and every one of us, filling us with grace and power and calling us to speak boldly of the love of our God and to labor courageously to make sure that everyone truly knows what it means to feel that love—in sustainable communities, in systems of justice and equality, in celebrations of joy, in acts of mercy, in joining them in their grief and brokenness.

Friends, we can and must answer the call. We must recognize that each and every one of us can be full to overflowing with a divine grace and an inherent power rooted in our very being. We must speak boldly about a God who loves us, about a God who is love. We must risk our safety and security and success to speak the truth of love in the face of systems of hate. We must fight to change those very systems. We must. We must. We must! Someday when we stand before the council and they say, "Are these things so?" may we look upon them with the faces of angels, and may we reply. Amen.



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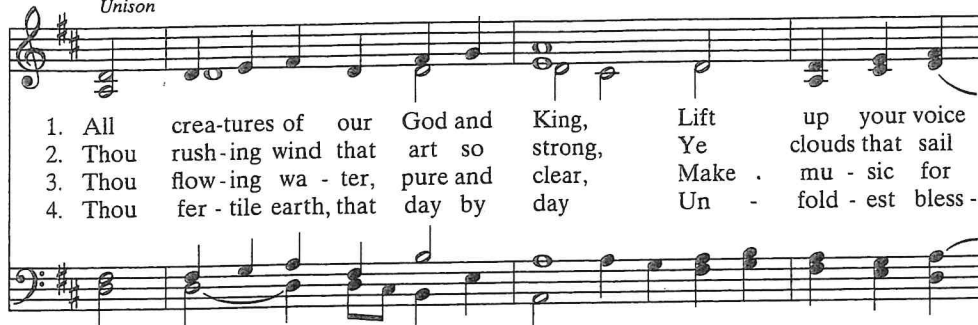
Francis of Assisi, 1225

Trans. and para. William Henry Draper, c. 1910; alt.

*Geistliche Kirchengesäng*, 1623; alt.

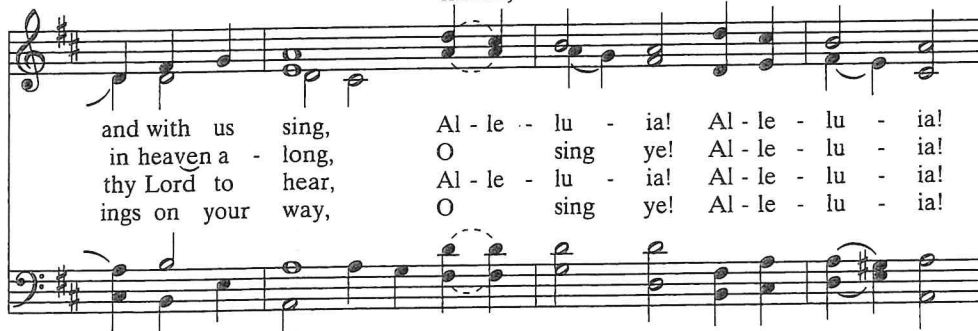
Harm. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Unison



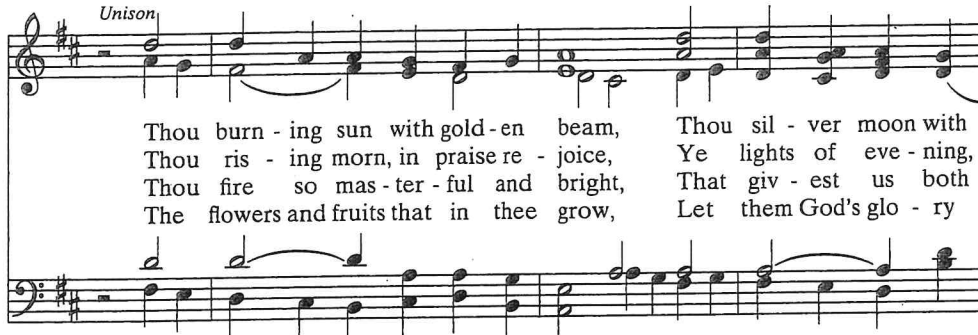
1. All crea-tures of our God and King, Lift up your voice  
 2. Thou rush-ing wind that art so strong, Ye clouds that sail  
 3. Thou flow-ing wa - ter, pure and clear, Make mu - sic for  
 4. Thou fer - tile earth, that day by day Un - fold - est bless -

Harmony



and with us sing, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 in heaven a - long, O sing ye! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 thy Lord to hear, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 ings on your way, O sing ye! Al - le - lu - ia!

Unison



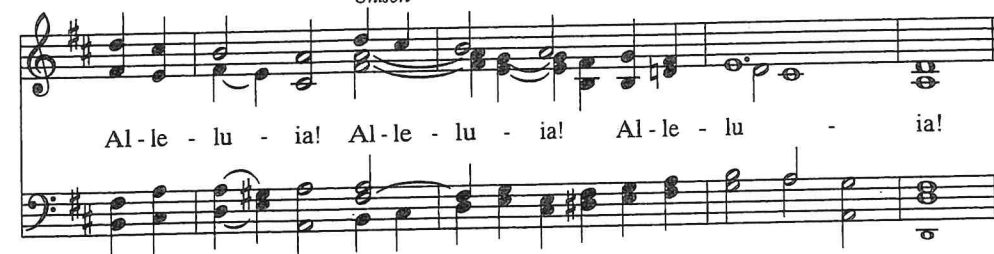
Thou burn - ing sun with gold - en beam, Thou sil - ver moon with  
 Thou ris - ing morn, in praise re - joice, Ye lights of eve - ning,  
 Thou fire so mas - ter - ful and bright, That giv - est us both  
 The flowers and fruits that in thee grow, Let them God's glo - ry

Harmony



soft - er gleam,  
 find a voice! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!  
 warmth and light,  
 al - so show!

Unison



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

5. And everyone of tender heart,  
 Forgiving others, take your part.  
 O sing ye! Alleluia!  
 Ye who long pain and sorrow bear,  
 Praise God and cast on God your care!  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

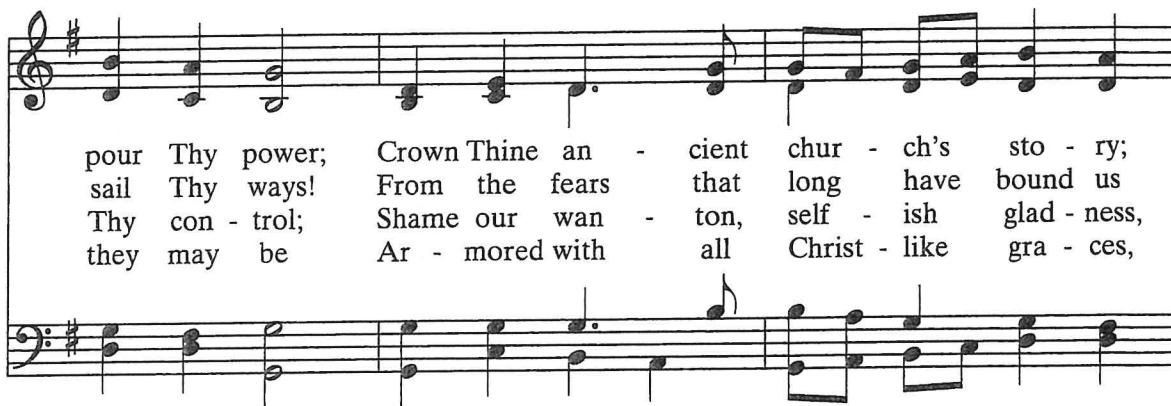
6. All creatures, your Creator bless,  
 And worship God in humbleness.  
 O sing ye! Alleluia!  
 Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
 And praise the Spirit, Three in One!  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Harry Emerson Fosdick, 1930; alt.

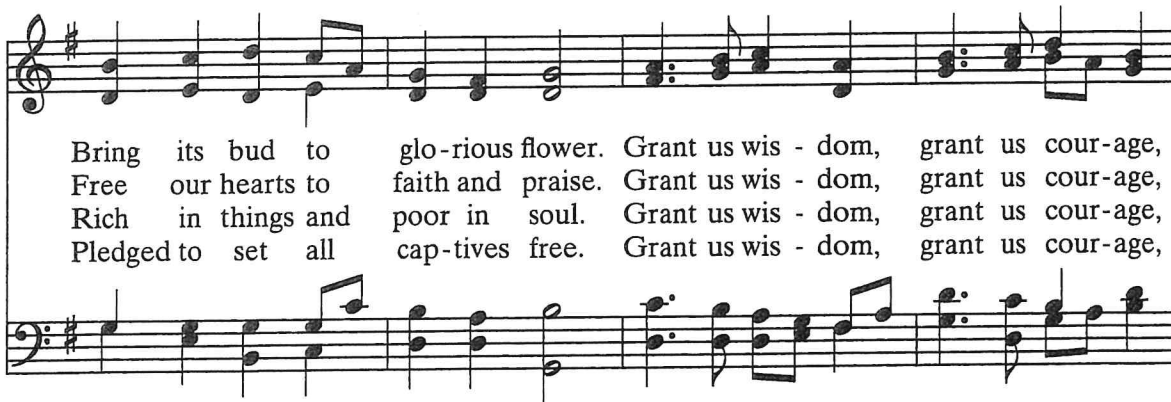
John Hughes, 1907



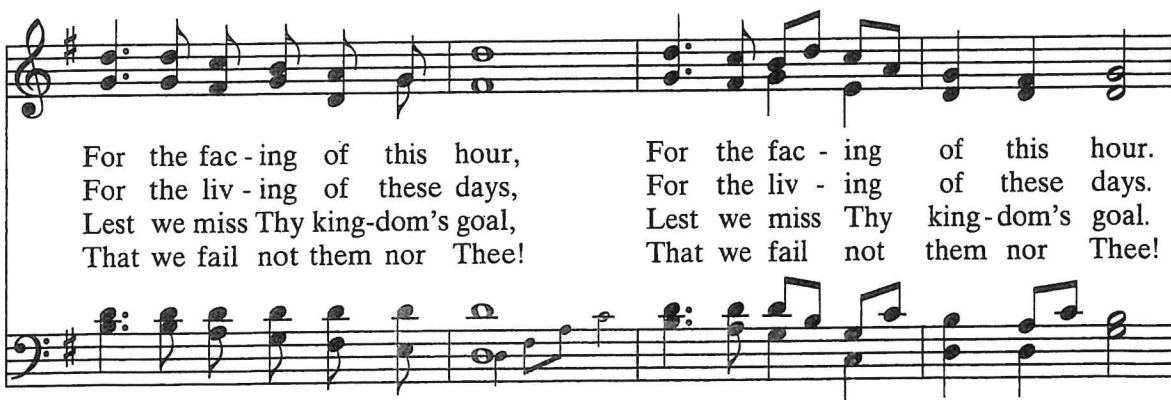
1. God of grace and God of glo - ry, On Thy peo - ple  
 2. Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us Scorn Thy Christ, as -  
 3. Cure Thy chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness, Bend our pride to  
 4. Set our feet on loft - y pla - ces; Gird our lives that



pour Thy power; Crown Thine an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;  
 sail Thy ways! From the fears that long have bound us  
 Thy con - trol; Shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,  
 they may be Ar - mored with all Christ - like gra - ces,



Bring its bud to glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 Free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 Rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 Pledged to set all cap - tives free. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



For the fac - ing of this hour, For the fac - ing of this hour.  
 For the liv - ing of these days, For the liv - ing of these days.  
 Lest we miss Thy king - dom's goal, Lest we miss Thy king - dom's goal.  
 That we fail not them nor Thee! That we fail not them nor Thee!

5. Save us from weak resignation  
 To the evils we deplore;  
 Let the gift of Thy salvation  
 Be our glory evermore.

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
 Serving Thee whom we adore,  
 Serving Thee whom we adore.