

July 6, 2025 + 10:30 A.M.
Fifth 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: Tracy Oprea

PRELUDE *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*

Larry Shackley

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalms* 30)

Leader: We will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn us up, and you did not let our foes rejoice over us.

ALL: O LORD our God, we cried to you for help, and you have healed us.

Leader: O LORD, you brought up our souls from Sheol, restored us to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

ALL: Let us sing praises to the LORD, we faithful ones, and give thanks to the LORD's holy name.

Leader: For the LORD's anger is but for a moment; the LORD's favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning!

ALL: Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to us! O LORD, be our helper!

Leader: You have turned our mourning into dancing; you have taken off our sackcloth and clothed us with joy,

ALL: So that our souls may praise you and not be silent. O LORD our God, we will give thanks to you forever. We worship you, O LORD!

***OPENING HYMN:** "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee" (357)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes, "Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Together let us confess how we have fallen short in bearing each other's burdens.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

O healing God, we join our voices together to confess to you. We confess that we no longer view the ministry of healing as central to our mission as your body. We forget that we are called to be healers in a broken world—healers of hearts and souls, healers of communities, and healers in the midst of violence and division. Remind us and equip us to embrace and comfort, call out systems that cause harm, and bring people together for reconciliation and justice. Forgive us for not doing this enough already. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ our liberator we pray. Amen.

KYRIE: No. 572 (unison)

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Hear the good news! If we sow to the Spirit, we will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

ALL: Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. 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 Spirit; 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

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: *Isaiah 66:10-14*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Galatians 6:1-10*

LESSON FROM ACTS: *Acts 3:1-10*

SERMON: The Beautiful Gate

MUSICAL MEDITATION: *Meditation on "Materna"*

Douglas E. Wagner

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

...and so, 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.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ...Let us proclaim the mysteries of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, breathe into us like you did the bones the valley! And pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

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

Our Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

OFFERING INVITATION

At the Beautiful Gate, the man found healing and belonging. Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we may continue ensuring that all find healing and belonging when they enter the gateway of our doors as well. 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 *God of Our Fathers*

Gilbert M. Martin

* DOXOLOGY:

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

O healing God, Peter and John identified and met the truest need of the man at the Beautiful Gate. Help us to use these gifts that we are dedicating to you to identify and meet the truest needs of this community and all your creation. In the name of Jesus Christ our liberator we pray. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN** "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" (Glory to God 835)

We Go Into the World

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*

Edward Broughton

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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.

Life of the Church

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 7/6:	Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM COMMUNION Fellowship Hosts: Worship & Music Mission Parking Lot Fundraiser
MONDAY 7/7:	GA – 6:30 PM Al-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 7/8:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) Mission – 6:00 PM Stewardship & Finance – 6:30 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 7/9:	Trustees – 10:00 AM Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 7/10:	Scripture in the Park 6:30 to 7:30 PM Redar Park, Schererville
SATURDAY 7/12:	Cook for Shelter – 1:00 PM

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 beginning July 9. For July 9, please bring any raffia, ribbon, styrofoam balls, floral and other decorative items. 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

Isaiah 66:10-14

¹⁰ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,
all you who love her;

rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her—

¹¹ that you may nurse and be satisfied
from her consoling breast,
that you may drink deeply with delight
from her glorious bosom.

¹² For thus says the Lord:

I will extend prosperity to her like a river
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream,
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm
and bounced on her knees.

¹³ As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;
your bodies shall flourish like the grass,
and it shall be known that the power of the Lord is with his servants,
and his indignation is against his enemies.

Galatians 6:1-10

6 My brothers and sisters, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. ⁴ All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. ⁵ For all must carry their own loads.

⁶ Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

⁷ Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸ If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.

Acts 3:1-10

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John

about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 Peter said, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.” 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 All the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to him.

The Beautiful Gate

Isaiah 66:10-14; Galatians 6:1-10; Acts 3:1-10

Throughout this season of Pentecost we have been celebrating the stunning ways in which God’s Spirit moves throughout Creation. She moves through the process of Creation, and she moves through all that which is created. As we discussed last week, God’s ultimate act of Creation was in giving life to us humans, making us an integral part of the community of the cosmos. And God said that it was very beautiful. God created humans in God’s image and likeness. The Latin wording for this, and thus the wording that has made its way into books of theology, is *IMAGO DEI*, the image of God. We are all made in the image of God. We all carry the image of God within us. *IMAGO DEI, I-M-A-G-O D-E-I*.

Our celebration of Pentecost has been a celebration of the beauty of God’s image enlivened in us through the breathing of the Holy Spirit—that breath which fills our lungs, our souls, our imaginations, our hearts, and our own spirits. She gusted through the streets of Jerusalem in spectacular fashion on the day of Pentecost itself, creating a reality in which *DIVERSITY* thrived in unity of purpose. People from all over the world, representing all of our diverse identities, were able to understand each other and create a community together. She then blew through that community, inspiring the structure that would allow for its persistent—a structure built upon the economics of *EQUITY*. All gave according to what they had and received according to what they needed. With resources shared in a way that met need rather than consolidated power, hierarchies of power were eliminated. Without hierarchies of power, there were no longer barriers to belonging. And so, as the diverse, equitable community breathed in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit ensured *INCLUSION*. In this way, diversity, equity, and inclusion became the building blocks of community as an embodiment of the *imago Dei*, as the image of our Triune God—multiple in unity.

As mentioned last week, though, we humans have not always been the greatest at living into the call of that beautiful community bearing the image of that beautiful mystery—especially us religious humans. We have done great things, and we have also messed up mightily. Without fail, that messing up happens when we try to separate ourselves from our roots in God’s Holy Spirit, when we seek uniformity over diversity, power over equity, and exclusion over inclusion. When we seek to graft ourselves onto the evil roots of uniformity, power, and exclusion, we cause great harm to our fellow image bearers and to Creation as a whole. And so, God’s Holy Spirit has to keep moving through us, with us, and in us to help us do things in the right way. She has to keep awakening us into truth and enlivening us into action. In today’s reading from *Acts* we see exactly that—God’s Holy Spirit awakening Peter and John into truth and enlivening them into action in order to ensure inclusion and belonging in God’s beautiful community. In particular, this was inclusion and belonging through healing.

Throughout history people have been excluded from belonging in communities because of hierarchies of health and ability. These hierarchies have been enacted through stigma and inaccessibility. Through stigma, societies define people with illnesses as and disabilities as burdensome, irresponsible, unworthy, contagious, and even sinful. Societies then make collective decisions to create physical and social architecture that limits or completely bars access for people with illnesses and disabilities. People are made to feel like they are burdens, like they are forgotten, like they are no longer fully part of the community. Sometimes people are completely ostracized from society, as was the case with people with leprosy in Biblical times and with people with HIV and AIDS in more recent times. Oftentimes the exclusion occurs more covertly and insidiously through the

mechanisms of capitalism, as people with illnesses and disabilities are barred access from generating income, creating a death spiral of sickness and poverty. One may be too sick to work and thus cannot afford treatment. Or, one may be more exposed to pollutants, diseases, and injury-causing forces because of poverty. They then become mutually reinforcing accelerants to death. Illness, disability, and poverty are then collectively stigmatized even more acutely.

Such was the reality of the man who had been lame from birth and who was daily carried to the gate at the temple that was named the Beautiful Gate in hopes that he would be able to appeal to people's consciences and collect alms there. It should be noted that people walked by him to enter the temple and exit the temple. This meant that he was *outside* of the temple itself. He was only carried to the gate and not inside, meaning that because of his disability he did not have access to the space that was considered to be both the center of the community and the house of God. And we can be sure that Peter and John had walked right by him before, as they surely would have frequented the temple. And that is why God's Holy Spirit needed to intervene once more, to awaken them and enliven them. They needed to open their eyes and ears to actually notice this man. They needed to open their hearts to actually care about this man.

As they did so, they realized that this man was not only suffering due to the nature of the disability that had taken away his mobility. He was also suffering because of his exclusion from the community, from the temple, from belonging. And so their first act of healing was to make eye contact, to create a situation in which they could actually see each other, in which they could actually have a true image of each other, in which they could actually honor the *IMAGO DEI* in each other. Then they spoke, offering something much greater than the money that drives the greed of our societies. They offered true healing—healing of body and healing of spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he would stand up and walk. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he would belong. Eye contact became body contact, as they boldly reached out to each other and grabbed hands. Listen to how the text describes what happened next: "Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." Wow! This was his very first time entering the temple, and he did so leaping and praising God because he knew that he belonged. God, of course, had always been there with him, but I can only imagine that God was also leaping for joy at how these humans had finally gotten something right.

And so he moved from the Beautiful Gate to the Beautiful Community. And he was clearly in community with Peter and John, as the text goes on to say that they were so close that he was physically clinging to them there in the temple. If you keep reading through verse sixteen, you will find Peter making this proclamation: "And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you." *Perfect health!* Wow! Now *that* is something you will never find in a healthcare system that you have to pay for, in a healthcare system that needs people to keep being sick so that there can keep being profits. As Peter and John said, silver and gold were not part of the calculations.

And perfect health is certainly not accessible in a country whose leaders would create legislation taking away the health insurance of 17 million people, in a country whose leaders would choose the deaths of 14 million people globally rather than continue giving aid, in a country whose leaders would send armed captors to hospitals and houses of worship in order to detain and deport people in need, in a country whose leaders would support the bombing of hospitals and the blockading of food and medical supplies to many thousands of sick and starving children in Gaza. Perfect health is not possible when people seek to separate themselves from the roots of the Holy Spirit and instead graft themselves onto the evil roots of uniformity, power, and exclusion.

I know, I know, perfect health is something that could only be possible with the direct intervention of God. BUT, as bearers of the image of God, the *imago DEI*, we are called to be part of the healing process, part of the journey to health. Indeed, we are necessary for it. For, we are the ones who can ensure access to belonging. We are the ones who can look people in the eye and honor each other's shared human dignity. We are the ones who can reach out our hands and touch and grasp and lift up. We are the ones who can offer our bodies as sources of stability that can be clung to as people make the journey from Beautiful Gate to Beautiful Community. May we do so, and may those in power do the same. Amen.

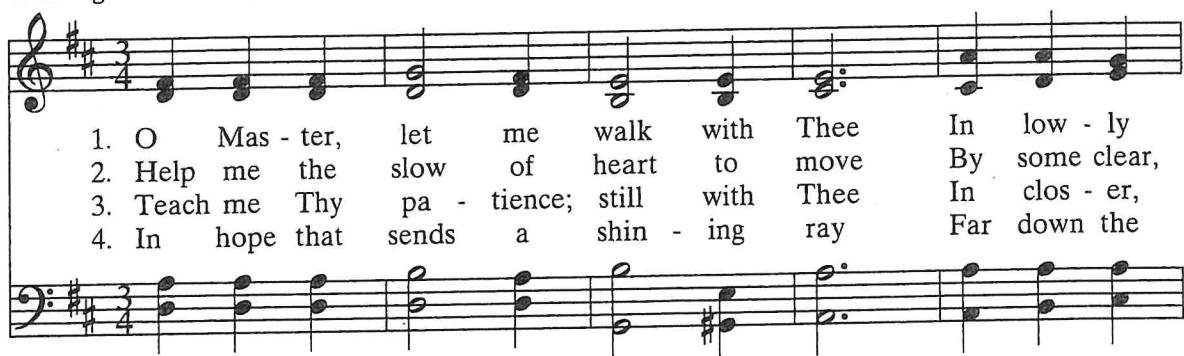
O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

357

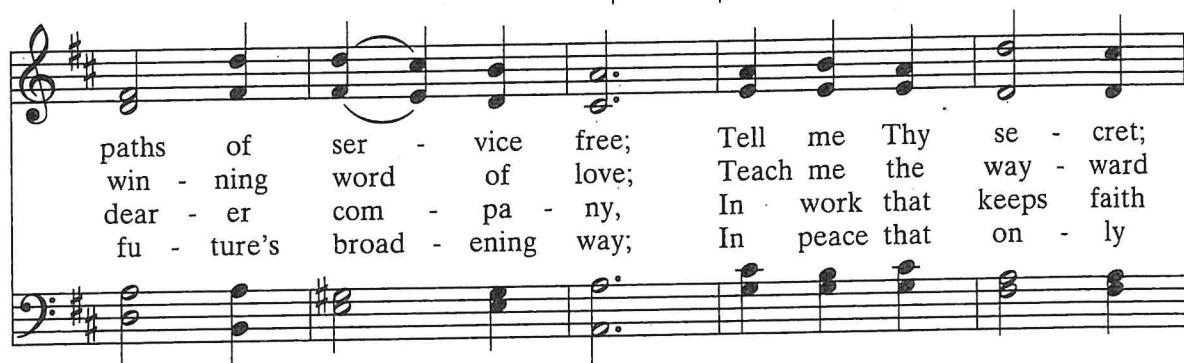
Washington Gladden, 1879

MARYTON LM

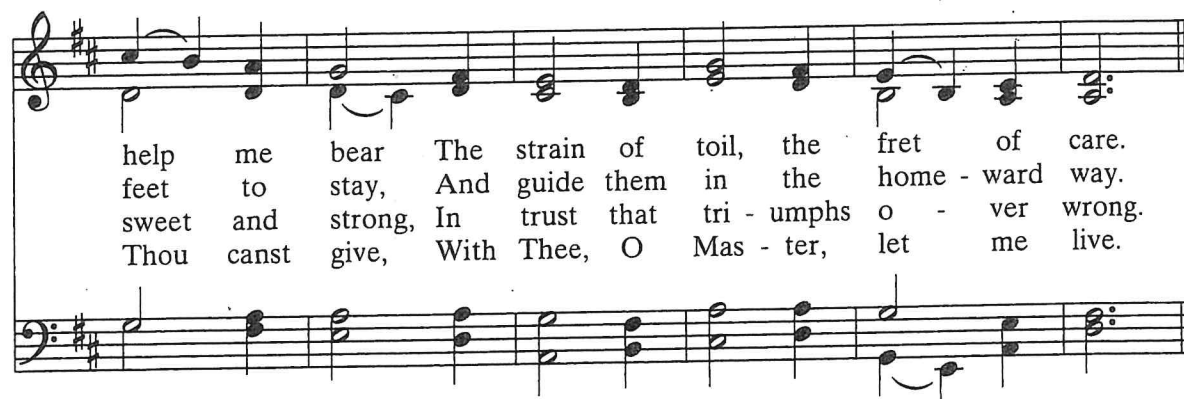
Henry Percy Smith, 1874



1. O Mas - ter, let me walk with Thee In low - ly
 2. Help me the slow of heart to move By some clear,
 3. Teach me Thy pa - tience; still with Thee In clos - er,
 4. In hope that sends a shin - ing ray Far down the

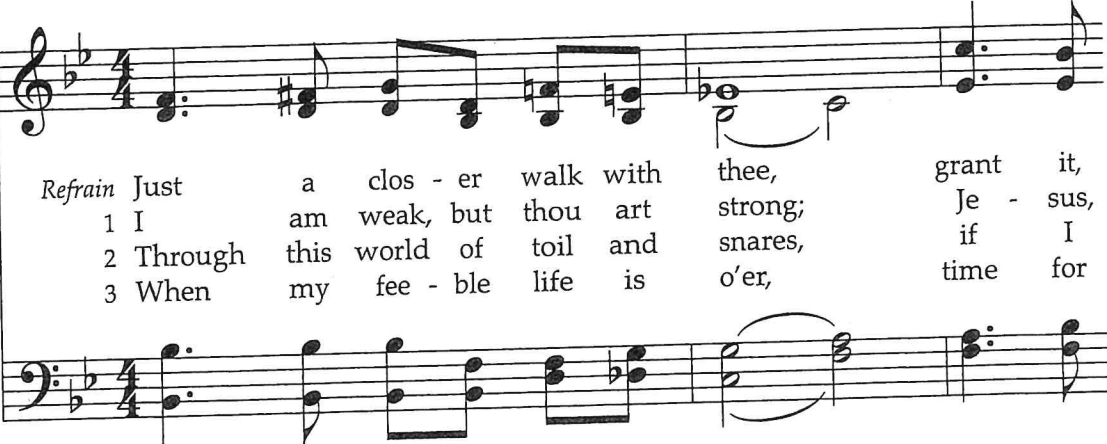


paths of ser - vice free; Tell me Thy se - cret;
 win - ning word of love; Teach me the way - ward
 dear - er com - pa - ny, In work that keeps faith
 fu - ture's broad - ening way; In peace that on - ly

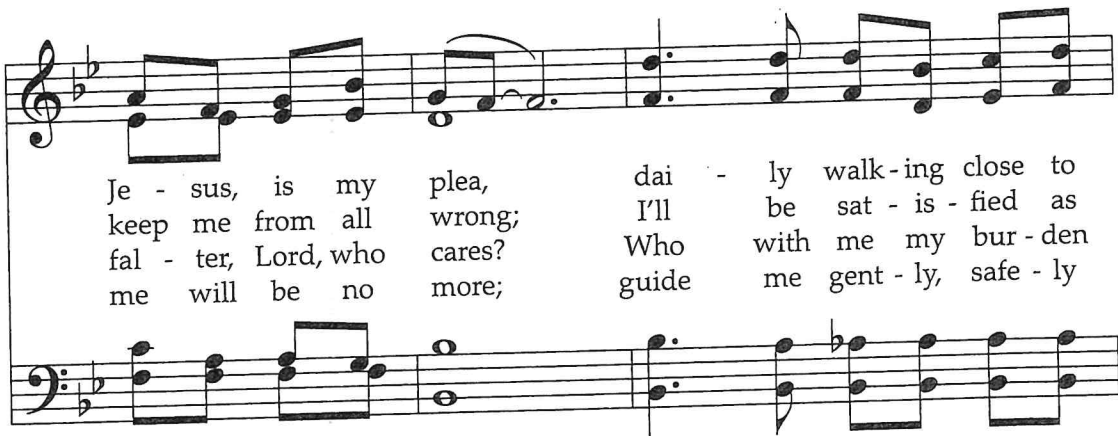


help me bear The strain of toil, the fret of care.
 feet to stay, And guide them in the home - ward way.
 sweet and strong, In trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong.
 Thou canst give, With Thee, O Mas - ter, let me live.

Just a Closer Walk with Thee 835



Refrain Just a clos - er walk with thee, grant it,
 1 I am weak, but thou art strong; Je - sus,
 2 Through this world of toil and snares, if I
 3 When my fee - ble life is o'er, time for



Je - sus, is my plea, dai - ly walk - ing close to
 keep me from all wrong; I'll be sat - is - fied as
 fal - ter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my bur - den
 me will be no more; guide me gent - ly, safe - ly



thee: let it be, dear Lord, let it be.
 long as I walk, let me walk close to thee. Ref.
 shares? None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee. Ref.
 o'er to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore. Ref.