

MAY 11, 2025
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
HAPPY MOTHERS' AND OTHERS' DAY



**ST. JOHN UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST**
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Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.
Respond with words in bold print

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” Jerry Ray

PENNIES FOR MISSION:

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Transformative Creator, you envelope us with examples of community

ALL: We are witness to Jesus’ up close and personal attempts to learn about and be with the people

One: You want us to know that what happens outside of our church building matters to G-d’s people.

ALL: Continue to work in and through us to build towards collective flourishing

One: Call us into living—

ALL: Call us into being curious, approachable, and loving towards all Your creation

***INVOCATION:**

Creator of the Collective, let us begin by sitting in silence so that we can feel the presence of You in one another (be silent for 30 seconds)... open up all our senses to be more available to the possibility of the Creator’s reflection in one another and let us be ready to build up a world, one in which we become agents of

change. Open our hearts, O G-d, and help us to feel the brokenness of your world so we can begin again. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 472**

“Precious Lord, Take My Hand”

***UNISON PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

Holy One, We ask ourselves: Who do we say that we are? How do we show up against an oligarchy that allows discrimination, war, genocide, violence, transphobia, and poverty run rampant amongst G-d’s people. When we experience tension, give us the courage to feel into that tension and to invite a feeling of love and kindness and grace the way that Your Son showed us time and time again. Be with us in this and all the hard moments still to come. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE:**

Beloved, let us go forth today and all the days with the courageous belief that we can truly recognize the Holy One in the other and then act accordingly. By grace, Creator will move us towards the transformation where acts of love, humility, curiosity, faith, abundance, and hope are on display for all to witness.

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 9:36-43

³⁶ In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas). Her life overflowed with good works and compassionate acts on behalf of those in need. ³⁷ About that time, though, she became so ill that she died. After they washed her body, they laid her in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Since Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two people to Peter. They urged, “Please come right away!” ³⁹ Peter went with them. Upon his arrival, he was taken to the upstairs room. All the widows stood beside him, crying as they showed the tunics and other clothing Dorcas made when she was alive.

⁴⁰ Peter sent everyone out of the room, then knelt and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. ⁴¹ He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then he called God’s holy people, including the widows, and presented her alive to them. ⁴² The news spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 23 Page 633

SECOND TESTAMENT: Revelation 7:9-17

The great crowd and seventh seal

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, ¹² saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving
and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”

¹³ Then one of the elders said to me, “Who are these people wearing white robes, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴ I said to him, “Sir, you know.” Then he said to me, “These people have come out of great hardship. They have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb’s blood. ¹⁵ This is the reason they are before

God’s throne. They worship him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them. ¹⁶ They won’t hunger or thirst anymore. No sun or scorching heat will beat down on them, ¹⁷ because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water,^[a] and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

***GOSPEL LESSON: John 10:22-30**

Jesus at the Festival of Dedication

²² The time came for the Festival of Dedication^[a] in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was in the temple, walking in the covered porch named for Solomon. ²⁴ The Jewish opposition circled around him and asked, “How long will you test our patience? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered, “I have told you, but you don’t believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, ²⁶ but you don’t believe because you don’t belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life. They will never die, and no one will snatch them from my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them from my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

MESSAGE: “What Makes a ‘Good’ Mother”

I always look forward to “Good Shepherd” Sunday. I especially like the hymns such as “Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us” written by William Bradbury. He wrote many of our favorite hymns. This one is based on John 10:1-29.

However, I can’t say that I have ever met a shepherd in person. On TV I’ve seen those herders with sheep dogs who do most of the work for the shepherd. It amazes me how the dogs know exactly what to do, even when the shepherd is not giving them any signals. The dogs know right from wrong.

It just so happens that this year Mother’s Day is the same day as Jesus’ message to us about him being the perfect shepherd. Have you ever thought of Mother’s as shepherds. I imagine preschool teachers have the hands full just trying to keep the little ones gathered together.

Years ago, when I was a teenager, I was asked to babysit for the coach’s 4 young boys ages 7, 6, 5, and 4. Their names were Steve, Stan, Stu, and Sterling, but they usually called the baby “Stinky” because he usually had dirty diapers on. And the oldest was hearing impaired and so the 6 year old used sign language to tell him what I was saying. It was a one time job, thank goodness. It wasn’t that they were bad, they just liked were energetic and liked to scatter. It was a summer evening and their mom said to let them play outside until 8. Then it was

time for snacks, baths, (all together in one tub) and bed. Sounded easy enough. It took me over 30 minutes to get them all in the house. And then the dog got loose outside and the kids were gone again trying to catch the dog. I could have used the skills of a shepherd that evening.

Being a Mother is no job for the weak. Most of us do our very best to be good mothers. However, some children are not that lucky. Some mothers work three jobs just to put food on the table. No time to attend ball games with their kids. Some mother’s have an addiction problem. Some mothers had terrible mothers themselves and don’t know any differently. Where do they turn for help; help they don’t realize they need. Yes, there are agencies that can help. But we know another place, we as mothers should follow; One example is in our Gospel Lesson today; verses 25-30.

“The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, ²⁶ but you don’t believe because you don’t belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life. They will never die, and no one will snatch them from my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them from my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

Not only should our children follow this shepherd; we should to. When we are in doubt, see what Jesus says. When we don't know where to turn, ask Jesus.

What makes a "good mother"? One who gets her advice from the greatest shepherd who leads us. Not from Dr. Spock. He never had any children. Jesus has many, many, many, including us. Amen.

CHANEL CHOIR: "Find Us Faithful" Jon Mohr

PASTORAL PRAYER:

How can we say thank you, Jesus enough. You give us more and more and yet we ask for more. We ask for forgiveness when we sin. We ask for help to help others instead of going out to help, writing a check, or getting on the phone. All ways to help others but we seem to always have excuses. Oh, I'll do it later. There may not be a later, Jesus reminds us.

Before it's too late, we need to pray; pray for those affected by recent natural disasters. We need to pray for those in Washington who need to remember that God is the one who should be in charge. Who's listening to those who have lost their job? Who will feed my children? Do the rich really need more money? They seem to forget the rest of us.

WE NEED to follow the good shepherd, no matter what. Lead us. Guide us. Lift our heavy hearts.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 774

**Shepherd, lead, lead me in your righteousness,
Make your way plain before my face.
For it is you, God, you, God only,
who makes to lie down in safety.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

We've heard G-d's call to us – to be abundant with our gifts of grace, love, forgiveness and time. And so let us be abundant in our giving so that the work of the church can be carried out beyond this building.

OFFERTORY: "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"
Edward Broughton

***DOXOLOGY:**

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

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

Collective Creator we thank you for the gifts of the people – from our ancestors to our elders to those who

have still yet to come, we share what we have so that all can flourish and follow you. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: “He Leadeth Me”**
He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
What-e’er I do, where-e’er I be,
Still ‘tis God’s hand that leadeth me.

REFRAIN

*He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.*

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
nor ever murmur nor repine:
Content, what-e’er my lot may be,
Since ‘tis my God who leadeth me.

REFRAIN

And when my task on earth is done,
when by the grace the victory’ s won,
E’en death’s cold wave I will not flee,
Since God through Jordan leadeth me. **REFRAIN**

***BENEDICTION:**

Blessed people, go forth this week knowing that we are in this world together and that collective flourishing is possible. It begins with listening and paying attention to all that is around you and then inviting others to come alongside – so do just that, slow down and marvel at God’s creation.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE: “Let There Be Peace on Earth”

***POSTLUDE: “In His Presence” Bertha R. Frick**