



# Neighborhood Perch Church

Sundays around Cabarrus County

*This service is designed for use by a small gathering of God's people outside of the assembly of the full community. It draws from the Eucharistic tradition, but it is not a sacramental meal. All Christians are called to bless, and this includes blessings of food and drink shared and the people gathered. The people assemble with greetings and conversation. Candles are lit by individuals as they arrive, accompanied by a moment of silent prayer. One person acts as the leader to keep the flow of the worship moving. Prayers and readings are divided among the rest of the group.*

*The leader opens with Call to Worship*

## **Call to Worship**

*One* All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall bow before him. – Psalm 22:26

## **Opening Prayer**

*An appropriate prayer is offered to set the tone for worship. Collects from The Book of Common Prayer, especially the collect appointed for the day, are always appropriate.*

## **Music Offering**

*Please feel free to hum along! Singing in a mask is discouraged by health officials due to concerns for higher CO2 rebreathing when singing.*

## **The First Reading:**

### **Acts 8:26-40**

*One* An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire

treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the

chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

## **The Second Reading:**

### **John 15:1-8**

*One* Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for

whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

## **Teaching**

*In small groups of approximately three, remaining at appropriate physical distance, choose questions to discuss for approximately twenty minutes.*

- How is God be inviting us to illuminate scriptures for people in our lives?
- How do we see Christ unfolding in the lives of people whom we encounter who are from cultures, backgrounds, or countries different from our own?
- How do you approach the strangers in your land or the marginalized in your town?
- How is the Spirit of God moving you today? What is the Spirit-led urgency in your life?
- The sentence “Abide in me as I abide in you” is about rootedness in Christ that is both external and internal. What practices draw your awareness to abiding in Christ? How does your faith serve as your rootedness?

- How has a period of pruning in your life eventually brought you to a place of living a more flourishing, fruitful life?

## **Prayer of Blessing**

*Before leaving your small groups, standing and remaining at appropriate physical distance, spend approximately five minutes praying for one another in turn. Begin by asking what each person would like prayers for and then have the other members of the group lift them to God.*

## **Prayers of the People**

*The whole group gathers for prayer. Prayers may be formal and prepared ahead of time, or come forth from the group at the time of worship.*

*Prayers are always offered for:*

- *The Universal Church, its members, and its mission*
- *The Nation and all in authority*
- *The welfare of the world*
- *The concerns of the local community*
- *Those who suffer and those in any trouble*
- *Those who have died*

*One* Friends, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. So let us boldly pray to God, saying, “Loving God, *put your words in our hearts.*”

Great vine-grower, remove anything in your Church that hinders our love. May we abide in your Son Jesus. May he abide in us. We want to bear much fruit; we want to be disciples of your Son. *Silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

*One* Ruler of the nations, under your reign the poor shall eat and be satisfied: make known your saving deeds to the ends of the earth. *Silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

*One* Creator God, you nourish our bodies and our spirits with the fruits of the vine. Give us eyes to see your presence in our world; give us words to witness to your goodness. *The people are invited to add their thanksgivings, followed by silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

*One* Good Teacher, you sent Philip to the Ethiopian so that he would be transformed by understanding: bless our local colleges and universities. Give wisdom and understanding to all those who teach and all those who learn. *Silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

*One* O God, you are love. You love us so much. We pray for our brothers and sisters, especially those in great need. Increase our love for them; teach us empathy. Bless them with your healing touch. *The people are invited to add their petitions, followed by silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

*One* Almighty God, who truly to know is everlasting life: May your love be an eternal abode for all your saints. *Silence.*

Loving God,

*All* **Put your words in our hearts.**

## **Confession**

*One* Let us confess our sins against God and one another.

*All* **Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in**

**your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

*One* Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*All* **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

### **Blessing of the Meal**

*This portion of the service follows the shape of the Last Supper, and therefore may sound familiar and much like the Eucharist. However the elements are not consecrated, they are blessed, something all Christians are called to do. In times of pandemic, each person brings their own bread and wine. It is the time of prayer together that is shared, not the food.*

*Begin by having the person who will lead the prayer over the bread to invite each person to make ready the food they brought. When all are ready, the prayers are offered.*

*One* On the last night that Jesus gathered with his friends he took bread and he blessed it and shared it with his friends, for God who loves us, feeds us. As God's people ate manna in the wilderness and were satisfied, so we share this bread with Christ, and with one another. May it be for us bread from heaven, strength for our bodies, balm for our souls, and may it empower us to be Christ's body in this world. *Silence.*

*One* On the last night that Jesus gathered with his friends, he took wine and he blessed it and shared it with them. God who made us delights in us, and gives us good gifts to delight our tongues, and give joy to our souls. As Jesus offered the Samaritan woman water that would not fail, so Jesus offers us the same. May this wine be for us the holy drink of heaven, and may quench the thirst of our souls.

*All* **Holy and life-giving God, we thank you for the bounty of your Creation laid before us. We ask you to bless it, that it may be to us a holy**

**meal. We give thanks for all those who labored so that it might sustain us. Through it may you give us the strength to be your good stewards; to care and tend your creation, and to care especially for our siblings – all the people of this world. We ask these things by the grace of Jesus Christ and in power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

*The gathered join in eating. As this requires removing mask, care must be taken to ensure proper physical distancing continues. Music may be appropriate.*

### **Music Offering During the Meal**

*Please feel free to hum along!*

### **Sending Blessing**

*One person offers a blessing on the group gathered as they are sent into the world to do the work God has given each to do.*

*All*    **Amen.**

*One*    Go in peace to love and serve the  
          Lord

*All*    **Amen.**

*This service includes the work of The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, The Rev. Josephine Robertson, All Saints Episcopal Church, Bellevue, WA and Renew Community House Church.*