

# First Church Birmingham

A Reconciling United Methodist Congregation

May 18, 2025

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

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**Prelude—Folk Tune**

**Percy Whitlock**

**Welcome**

**Chris Minnix and Jay Jessee**

**Announcements**

**Ashley Hess**

**Opening Hymn—Oh, Praise the Gracious Power**

Oh, praise the gracious pow'r  
that tumbles walls of fear  
and gathers in one house of faith  
all strangers far and near.

*Refrain*

We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!

Oh, praise persistent truth  
that opens shuttered minds  
and eases from their anxious clutch  
the prejudice that blinds:

*Refrain*

We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!

Oh, praise inclusive love,  
encircling ev'ry race,  
oblivious to gender, wealth,  
to social rank or place:

*Refrain*

We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!

Oh, praise the tide of grace  
that laps at every shore  
with visions of a world at peace,  
no longer led by war:

*Refrain*

We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!

Oh, praise the pow'r, the truth,  
the love, the word, the tide.  
and more than these,  
Oh praise their source,  
praise Christ the crucified:

*Refrain*

We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!

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**Prayer of Confession**

**Rev. Katie Gilbert**

**Loving God, we confess that too often we forget about the interconnectedness of our world and the profound impact we can have on one another. By centering our own perspectives and following our selfish ways, we regularly fail to see one another as we truly are. Forgive us for ignoring those who are suffering, wounded, lonely, and grieving in our very midst. Help us to see with your eyes, to move from sympathy to empathy that we might experience the fullness of a life lived as family. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance**

**Rev. Katie Gilbert**

Friends, the Divine does not keep score. God's love is wider than the ocean and more numbered than the stars. Even when we miss the mark, God forgives. Trust this truth: you are known, forgiven, and loved.

**We are known, forgiven, and loved.**

**Thanks be to God.**

— *Rev. Katie Gilbert*

**The Scripture Reading—Galatians 3:28 (NRSVUE)**

**Katherine Mullen**

<sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

**Pastoral Prayer and Our Lord's Prayer**

**Katherine Mullen**

**Our Father-Mother 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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

**Anthem—Desert Song** (Brooke Ligertwood)

**The Loft Band**

This is my prayer in the desert  
When all that's within me feels dry  
This is my prayer in my hunger and need  
My God is the God who provides

This is my prayer in the fire  
In weakness or trial or pain  
There is a faith proved of more worth than gold  
So refine me, Lord through the flame

I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here

This is my prayer in the battle  
When triumph is still on its way  
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ  
So firm on His promise, I'll stand

I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here

All of my life, in every season  
You are still God, I have a reason to sing  
I have a reason to worship  
All of my life, in every season  
You are still God, I have a reason to sing  
I have a reason to worship  
All of my life, in every season  
You are still God, I have a reason to sing  
I have a reason to worship  
(All my life)  
All of my life, in every season  
You are still God, I have a reason to sing  
I have a reason to worship

I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here  
I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare

God is my victory and He is here

This is my prayer in the harvest  
When favor and providence flow  
I know I'm filled to be emptied again  
The seed I've received I will sow

**Call for Offering**

**Ashley Hess**

**Offertory—Fill Us, Lord**

**Text: David Adam, Music: Eleanor Daley**

God of the deep, Pour your eternity into our hearts  
For we hunger and thirst for you, Lord,  
Seek to live in you, And to know that you live in us.  
Drive away all doubt, and darkness That in your presence we rejoice  
Drive away all fear and anxiety.  
That in your love we may have hope.  
Amid the storm and tempest in your deep peace we may rest.

**Sermon—Fostering Wholeness**

**Rev. Jonathan Goss**

**Affirmation of Faith**

**Rev. Katie Gilbert**

**As a gathered community of disciples,  
we affirm our commitment to the way of Jesus  
who is the Liberator of the oppressed,  
the Bread of Heaven,  
God enfleshed.**

**With faith, we aim to live as Christ,  
seeking to create a world where all are fully seen.  
We believe in God's promise to uplift the lowly  
and bring the powerful down from their thrones.  
We believe the resurrecting power of Christ  
cannot be overcome by evil,  
but persists in all collective efforts  
to make life flourish in the midst of destruction,  
to birth beauty in places of death,  
and to tend gently to the aches of this world.  
We profess the transforming power of love.  
In the company of the saints who go before us,  
we journey together by grace,  
seeking to unlearn all that obstructs authentic relationship,  
Listening for the guidance of Sacred Wisdom,  
And praying earnestly for the day  
The Kindom of God is born anew.  
Until it is so, we live in hope,  
for God is with us.**

*— adapted from Rev. M Jade Kaiser, enfleshed*

**Closing Hymn—Precious Lord, Take My Hand (PRECIOUS LORD)**

Precious Lord, take my hand,  
lead me on, let me stand,  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
through the storm, through the night,  
lead me on to the light:

*Refrain*

Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear,  
precious Lord, linger near,  
when my life is almost gone,  
hear my cry, hear my call,  
hold my hand lest I fall:

*Refrain*

Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When the darkness appears  
and the night draws near,  
and the day is past and gone,  
at the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:

*Refrain*

Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

**Benediction**

**Rev. Katie Gilbert**

**Postlude—I Thank God (Maverick City)**

**The Loft Band**

Wandering into the night  
Wanting a place to hide  
This weary soul, this bag of bones  
And I tried with all my mind  
And I just can't win the fight  
I'm slowly drifting, oh vagabond  
And just when I ran out of road  
I met a man I didn't know  
And he told me  
That I was not alone

He picked me up  
He turned me around  
He placed my feet on solid ground  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
Because He healed my heart  
He changed my name

Forever free, I'm not the same  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
I thank God

I cannot deny what I see  
Got no choice but to believe  
My doubts are burning  
Like ashes in the wind  
So, so long to my old friends  
Burden and bitter night

You can't just keep them moving  
No, you ain't welcome here  
From now 'til I walk  
The streets of gold  
I'll sing of how You saved my soul  
This wayward son  
Has found his way back home

He picked me up  
Turned me around  
Placed my feet on solid ground  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
Because He healed my heart  
Changed my name  
Forever free, I'm not the same  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
Oh, I thank God

Oh, I thank God  
Oh, I thank God  
Oh, I thank God

Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free  
Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free  
Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, yes I am free  
Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free

Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free

Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free  
Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free  
Hell lost another one  
I am free, I am free, I am free

He picked me up  
He turned me around  
He placed my feet on solid ground  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
Because He healed my heart  
He changed my name  
Forever free, I'm not the same  
I thank the Master  
I thank the Savior  
I thank God



### **First Church Ministry Team**

Interim Senior Pastor: Clauzell Williams  
Pastor: Jonathan Goss  
Executive Pastor: Katie Gilbert  
Minister of Community Engagement: Katherine Mullen  
Minister to Families and Youth: Ashley Hess  
Nursery Coordinator: Natalie Bogart-Pierre  
Organist: Richard Byrd  
Minister of Music: Patrick Evans  
Design: Blake Hobbs  
Office Administrator: Peg Thompson  
Business Administrator: Steve Pitts  
Maintenance Supervisor: Coty Smith  
Wedding Director: Betsy Pate  
Executive Director of Birmingham Early Learning Center: Cassandra Copeland