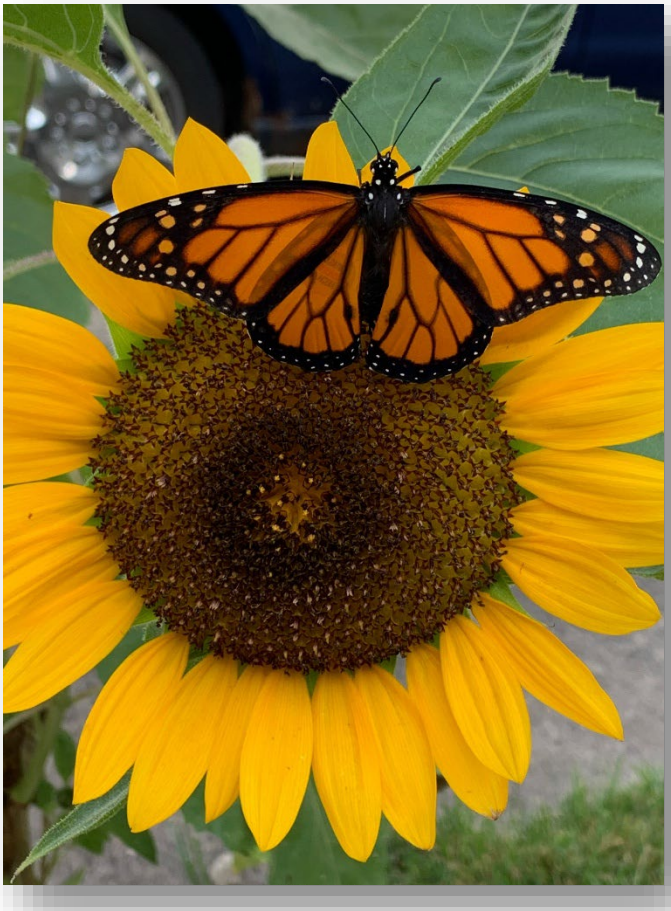
St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Canton, Ohio



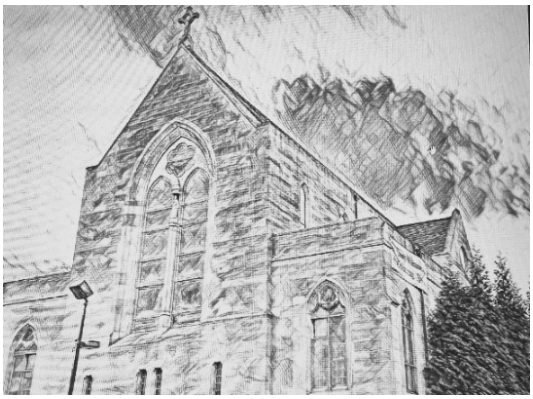
Hear our prayers this day as we remember those of many nations and differing faiths whose lives were cut short by the fierce flames of anger and hatred.

16th Sunday after Pentecost
Holy Eucharist
Sept. 13, 2026, 10:30 a.m.

Welcome to St. Paul's

Online and in-person services begin with music at 10:25 a.m.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
425 Cleveland Ave SW
Canton OH 44702
(330) 455-0286
Week of Sept. 13: Office hours Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Website: www.stpaulscanton.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/stpaulscanton
e-mail: stpaulsoffice@att.net
We're on YouTube: StPaulsCanton



St. Paul's Mission

St. Paul's is an exceptionally welcoming Episcopal community in downtown Canton, grounded in faith, and called by God's Love to minister to the world.

The mission of The Episcopal Church is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." In step with that mission, we follow Jesus into loving, liberating, and life-giving relationships with God, with each other, and with the earth.

"Love God. Love Your Neighbor. Change the World."

"God Loves You. No Exceptions."

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Celebrants: The Revs. Joe and Kay Ashby

Readings and Psalm

Genesis 50:15-21
Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13
Romans 14:1-12
Matthew 18:21-35

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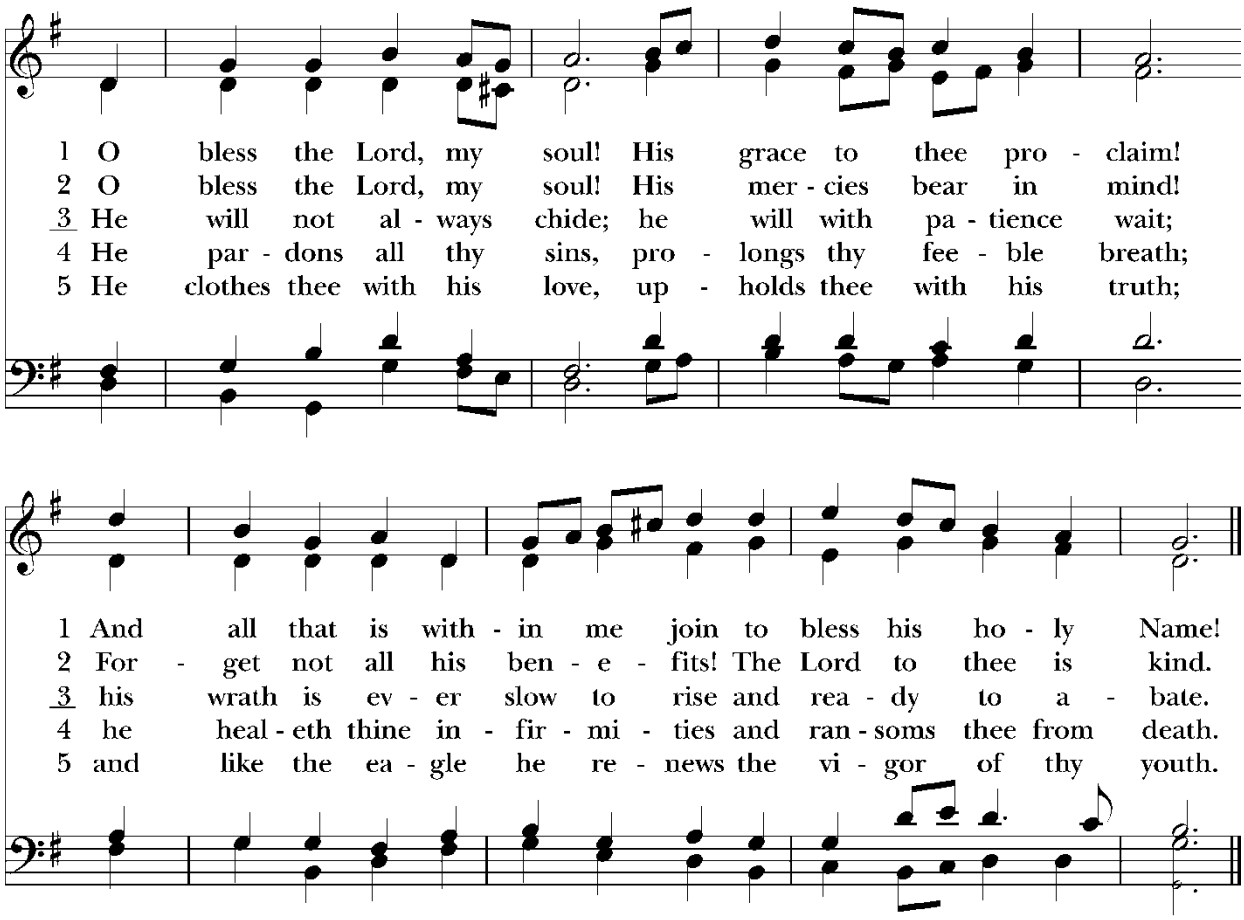
Prelude: *Prelude on St. Thomas* (Colin Mawby)

The Word of God

Please stand in body or spirit

Entrance Hymn: *O Bless the Lord my Soul* (St. Thomas) (Williams) (H 411)



6 Then bless his holy Name,
whose grace hath made thee whole,
whose loving-kindness crowns thy days:
O bless the Lord, my soul!

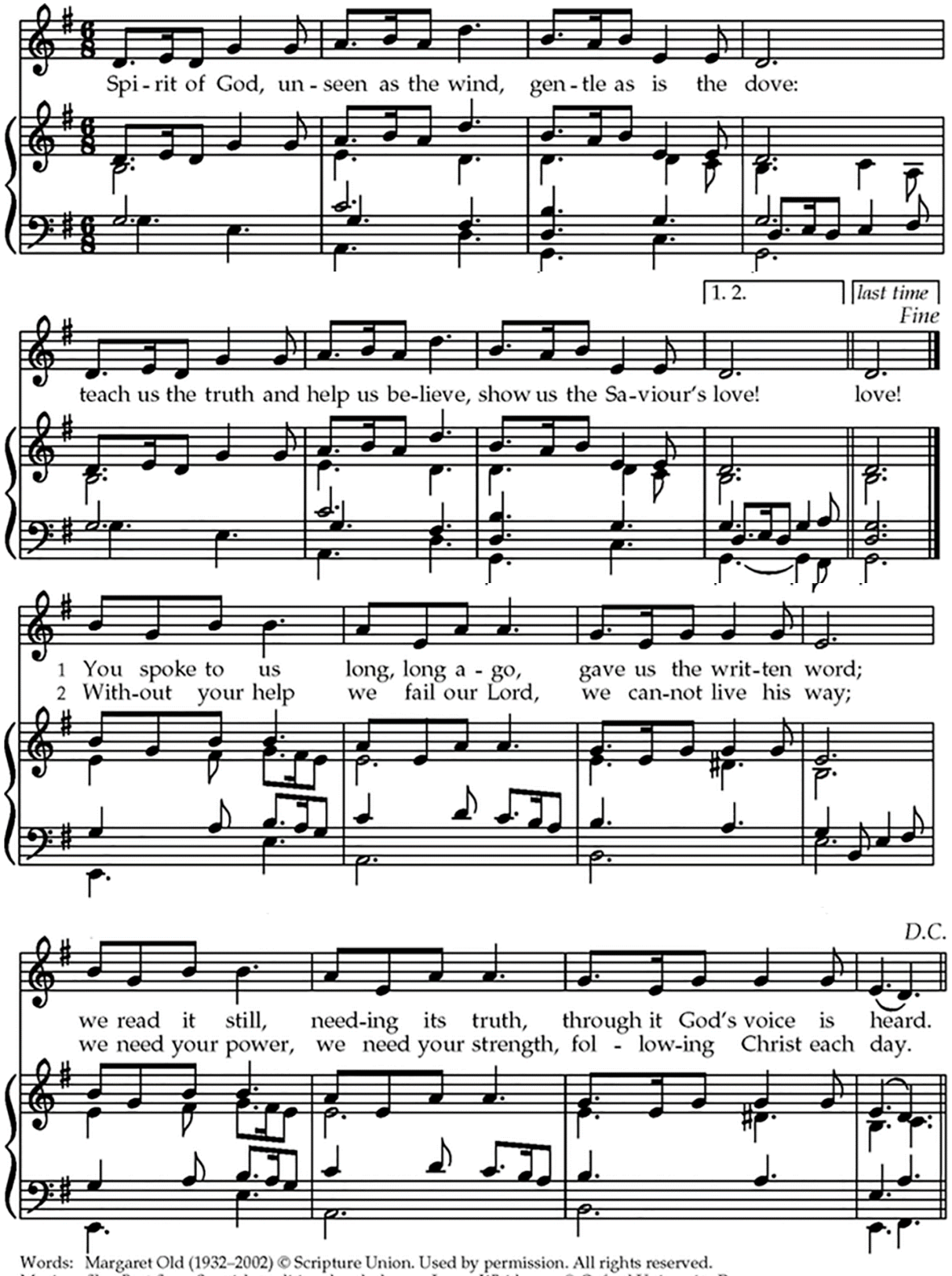
Opening Acclamation

Celebrant Blessed are you, holy and living One.
People You come to your people and set them free.

Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Song of Praise *Spirit of God* (Skye Boat Song) (VF 53)



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Music: *Skye Boat Song*, Scottish traditional melody; arr. James Whitbourn © Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

The Collect of the Day

Celebrant God be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

O God, because without you we are not able to please you mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

Please sit.

The Lessons

FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21

A Reading from the book of Genesis.
15Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a
grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" 16So
they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, 17'Say
to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in
harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your
father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18Then his brothers also wept, fell down
before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." 19But Joseph said to them, "Do not be
afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20Even though you intended to do harm to me, God
intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. 21So
have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured
them, speaking kindly to them.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People Thanks be to God.

PSALM 103:8-13

8The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
9He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
10He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
11For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
12As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
13As a father cares for his children, *
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 14:1-12

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Rome.

[1]Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over
opinions. [2]Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. [3]Those
who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass
judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. [4]Who are you to pass judgment
on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be
upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

[5]Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike.
Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. [6]Those who observe the day, observe it in
honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to
God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

[7]We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. [8]If we live, we live to the
Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we
are the Lord's. [9]For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of
both the dead and the living.

[10]Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise
your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. [11]For it is
written,

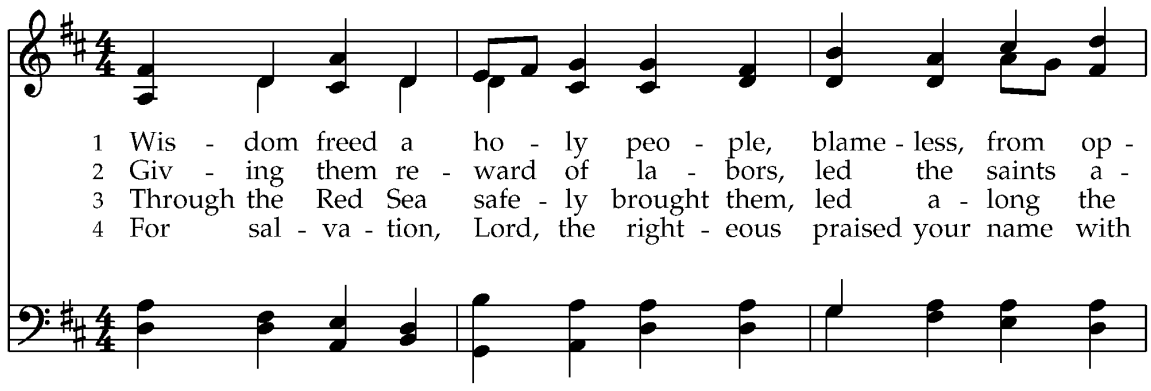
"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God."

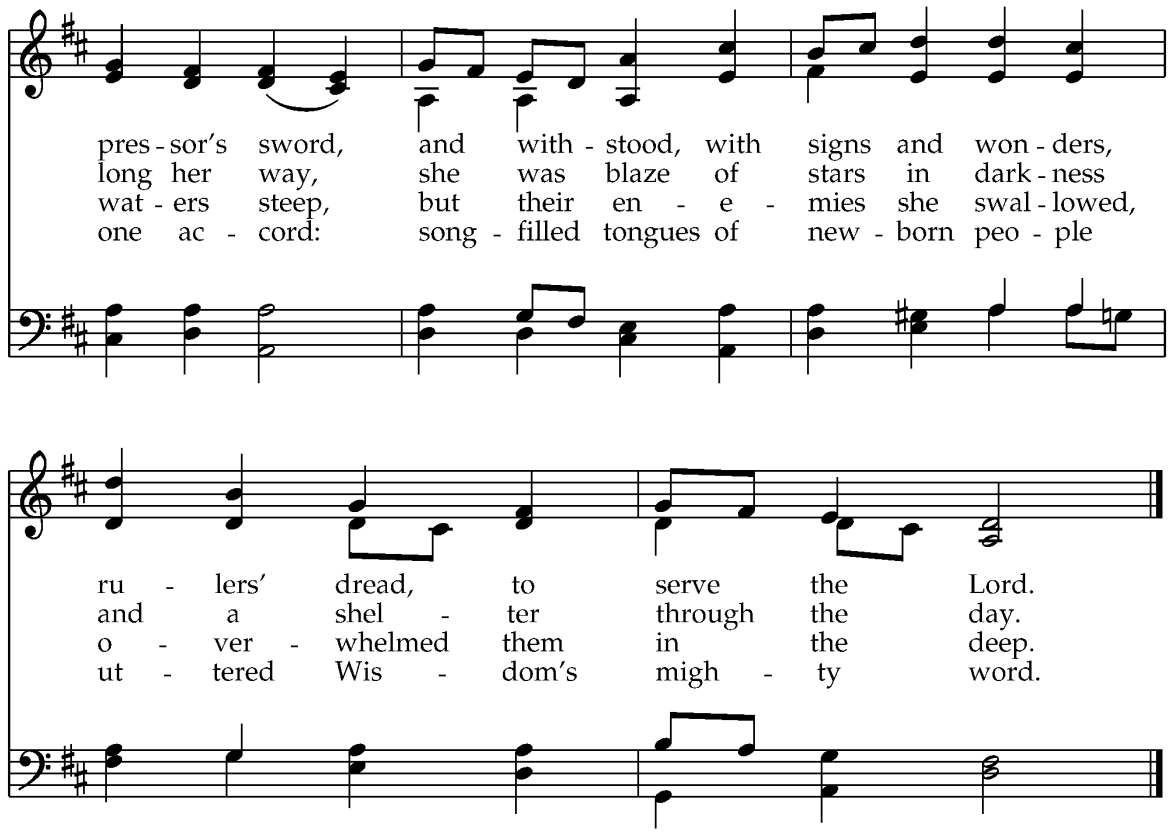
[12]So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People Thanks be to God.

Please stand in body or spirit

Sequence Hymn: *Wisdom Freed a Holy People* (Holton Holgate) (VF155)





Words: Patricia B. Clark, adapt. A Song of Wisdom © 1994 Selah Publishing Company, 4143 Brownsville Road, Suite 2, Pittsburgh, PA 15227-3306. www.selahpub.com. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
Music: *Halton Holgate*, William Boyce (1711–1779).

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:21-35

Celebrant The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus according to Matthew.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

[Jesus s[21]Peter came and said to [Jesus], "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" [22]Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

[23]"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. [24]When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; [25]and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. [26]So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' [27]And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. [28]But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' [29]Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have

patience with me, and I will pay you.’ [30]But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. [31]When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. [32]Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. [33]Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ [34]And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. [35]So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Celebrant The Gospel of Christ
People Glory to you, O Christ

The Sermon: The Rev. Joe Ashby

Please stand in body or spirit

The Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Please remain standing

Prayers of the People

All-loving God, whose life is the source of our life, whose love is the source of our salvation, pour out your grace upon your church and upon the world, that all may know you, love you, and serve one another in your Name;
Hear our prayer.

All-governing God, who set forth the foundations of the world, so direct, inspire, and correct those in authority in this nation and the world, that the laws they make and the policies they embrace may reflect the dignity with which you created humanity in your image, and in harmony with your creation. Remove from the imaginations of power all thoughts toward oppression, discrimination, or other sins of pride, that we may truly love your image in one another, and in your Name;
Hear our prayer

Incarnate God, you lived among neighbors, friends and enemies alike; you know the intimate and everyday concerns of your people in this and every community. Where there is suffering, continue to heal it. Where there is harm, continue to expose it. Where there is need, continue to feed your people with the abundant Providence of God, from whom all blessings flow. Do not let us forget, either, our responsibility for one another's welfare, in your Name;
Hear our prayer.

Resurrecting God, we pray for those who live in the shadow of death, in places of war, in places of terror, in unsafe homes, in uncaring communities. We pray for an end to war, an undoing of terror, a disarming of hatred. We pray for those who have died, known to us and known only to you, that we may one day receive the same mercy that you have for each of them. In your Name*;*
Hear our prayer.

Awe-inspiring God, we thank you for the joys of human living, for the relationships that bring us closer to the knowledge of your love, for the colors of creation that reflect your glory, as the prophet recognized in the rainbow the glory of the living God. We thank you that we are "marvelously made" in your image, and in your Name;
Hear our prayer.

All healing God, we ask for your healing presence in the lives of those we love especially for Joe Patterson, Elizabeth Mapp, Judy Johanning, Tom Lilly, Dr. Claire Pernsteiner, Johanna Middleton, Linda Fogle, Bill Urbanski, Cara Warren, Andrea, Marilyn Dickinson, Jackson, Gary, Richard Green, John Titmas, Holly Hillen, Frances Beacon, Vicki Simpkins, Brinley Wyczalek and Ronnie Long, in your Name; *Hear our prayer.*

We pray together now the Discernment Prayer for St. Paul's:
O Lord our God, May we, the parish of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, embrace your commandment of loving our neighbors as you have loved us while we discern who we are and how best to serve you. We ask that you quiet our souls, so we may listen to you. We ask that you grant us wisdom as we seek new leadership. And lastly, we ask for the courage to follow wherever you lead us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Litany for 9/11 Remembrance
Leader: O God, our refuge and strength, we come together in solemn remembrance of the lives lost, changed, and forever altered on September 11, 2001.
All: Have mercy upon us, O Lord.
Leader: We remember the innocent victims who perished in the Twin Towers, at the Pentagon, and in the fields of Pennsylvania.
All: Abide with us, God, and hold them in your eternal peace.
Leader: We honor the extraordinary courage of the first responders—the firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and ordinary citizens—who rushed into danger to save others.
All: Give strength to our memories of their selfless heroism.
Leader: We lift up the families who still carry the heavy ache of loss, and all who bear physical and emotional scars from that dark day and its aftermath.
All: Console us in our grief and surround the mourning with your healing comfort.
Leader: Where walls divide, fear separates, and hatred lingers in our world, nudge us along the narrow way of reconciliation and love.
All: Help us to choose peace over fear, and understanding over division.
Leader: Make us instruments of your healing on this earth, that love may be the last word, now and forever.
All: Amen.
Celebrant: O Almighty God, who brings good out of evil and turns even the wrath of your children towards your promised peace: Hear our prayers this day as we remember those of many nations and differing faiths whose lives were cut short by the fierce flames of anger and hatred. Hasten the time when the menace of war shall be removed. Cleanse both us and those perceived to be our enemies of all hatred and distrust. Pour out the spirit of peace on all the rulers of our world that we may be brought through strife to the lasting peace of the kingdom of your Son; Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Confession of Sin

Celebrant Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

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.

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

Please stand in body or spirit

The Peace

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.
The People greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Church Announcements

Holy Communion

Offertory Sentence (Psalm 50:14)

The Celebrant says
Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good your vows to the Most High.

Offertory Anthem: *Come Thou Font of Every Blessing* (Roland Martin)

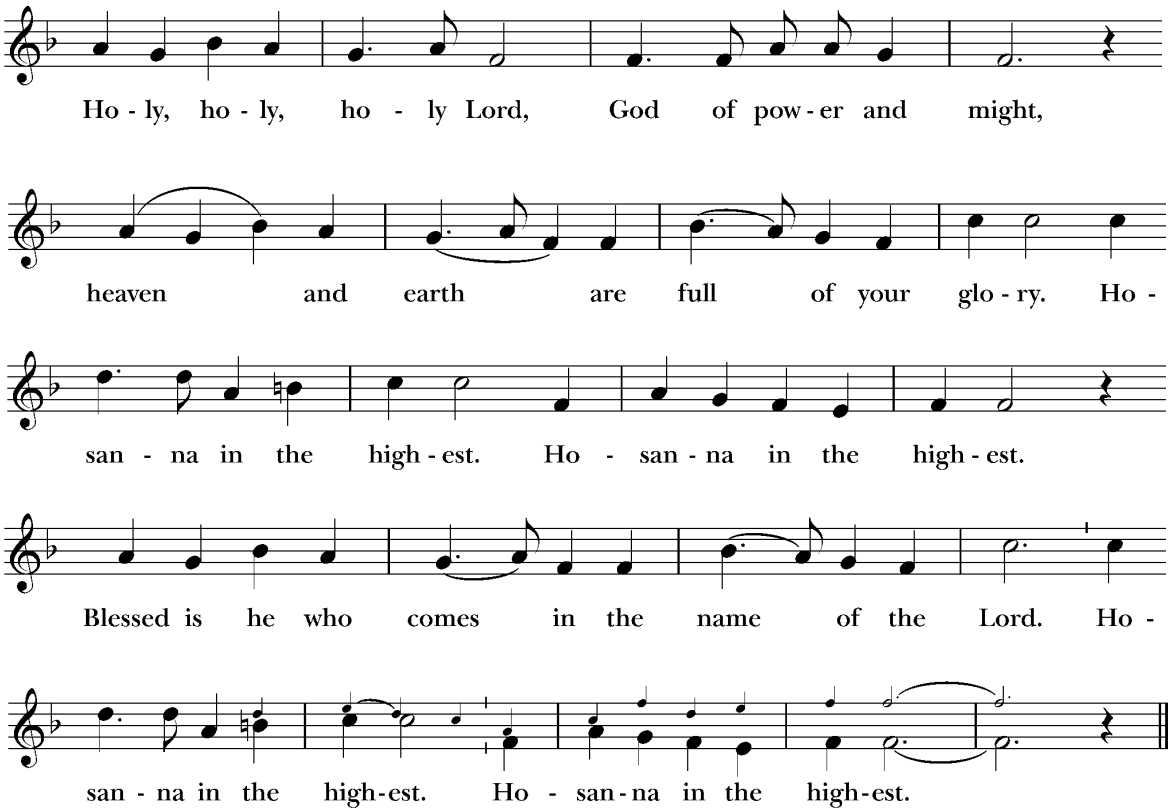
The Great Thanksgiving

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People We lift them to the Lord.
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is truly right, and good and joyful, to give you thanks, all-holy God, source of life and fountain of mercy. For you are the source of light and life; you made us in your image, and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore, joining with Angels and Archangels and with the faithful of every generation, we lift our voices with all creation as we sing: ♪♪♪

Sanctus S125



Blessed are you, Gracious God, creator of the universe and giver of life. You formed us in your own image and called us to dwell in your infinite love. You gave the world into our care that we might be your faithful stewards and show forth your bountiful grace.

But we failed to honor your image in one another and in ourselves; we would not see your goodness in the world around us; and so we violated your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love. Yet you never ceased to care for us, and prepared the way of salvation for all people.
Through Abraham and Sarah you called us into covenant with you. You delivered us from slavery, sustained us in the wilderness, and raised up prophets to renew your promise of salvation. Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word, made mortal flesh in Jesus. Born into the human family, and dwelling among us, he revealed your glory. Giving himself freely to death on the cross, he triumphed over evil, opening the way of freedom and life.

On the night before he died for us, Our Savior Jesus Christ took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his friends, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."♪
As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."♪

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:
Celebrant and People
Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Remembering his death and resurrection, we now present to you from your creation this bread and this wine. By your Holy Spirit may they be for us the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. Grant that we who share these gifts may be filled with the Holy Spirit and live as Christ's Body in the world. Bring us into the everlasting heritage of your daughters and sons, that with Paul and all your saints, past, present, and yet to come, we may praise your Name for ever. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. ***AMEN.***

The Lord's Prayer

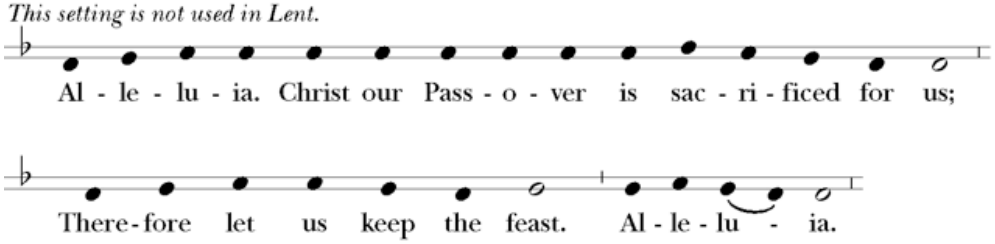
And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

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 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,
forever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread (S 152)

This setting is not used in Lent.



This setting may be sung full by all, or by the choir, or as a versicle and response.

Celebrant The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Spiritual Communion

Celebrant Please join us in praying with our siblings in Christ who are with us online and receiving communion spiritually.

Dearest Lord Jesus, we believe that you are truly present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. We love you above all things and long for you in our souls. Since we are not altogether in our church today to receive the bread and wine made holy, we ask you to come spiritually into our hearts. Fill us with your light and nourish us all with your word and Spirit. Amen.

****Note to the congregation: Everyone is welcome to receive Holy Communion. Please tell the clergy if you need gluten-free bread. If you come to the communion station for a blessing instead, please cross your arms on your chest. If you are interested in being baptized, please contact the priests of St. Paul's.*

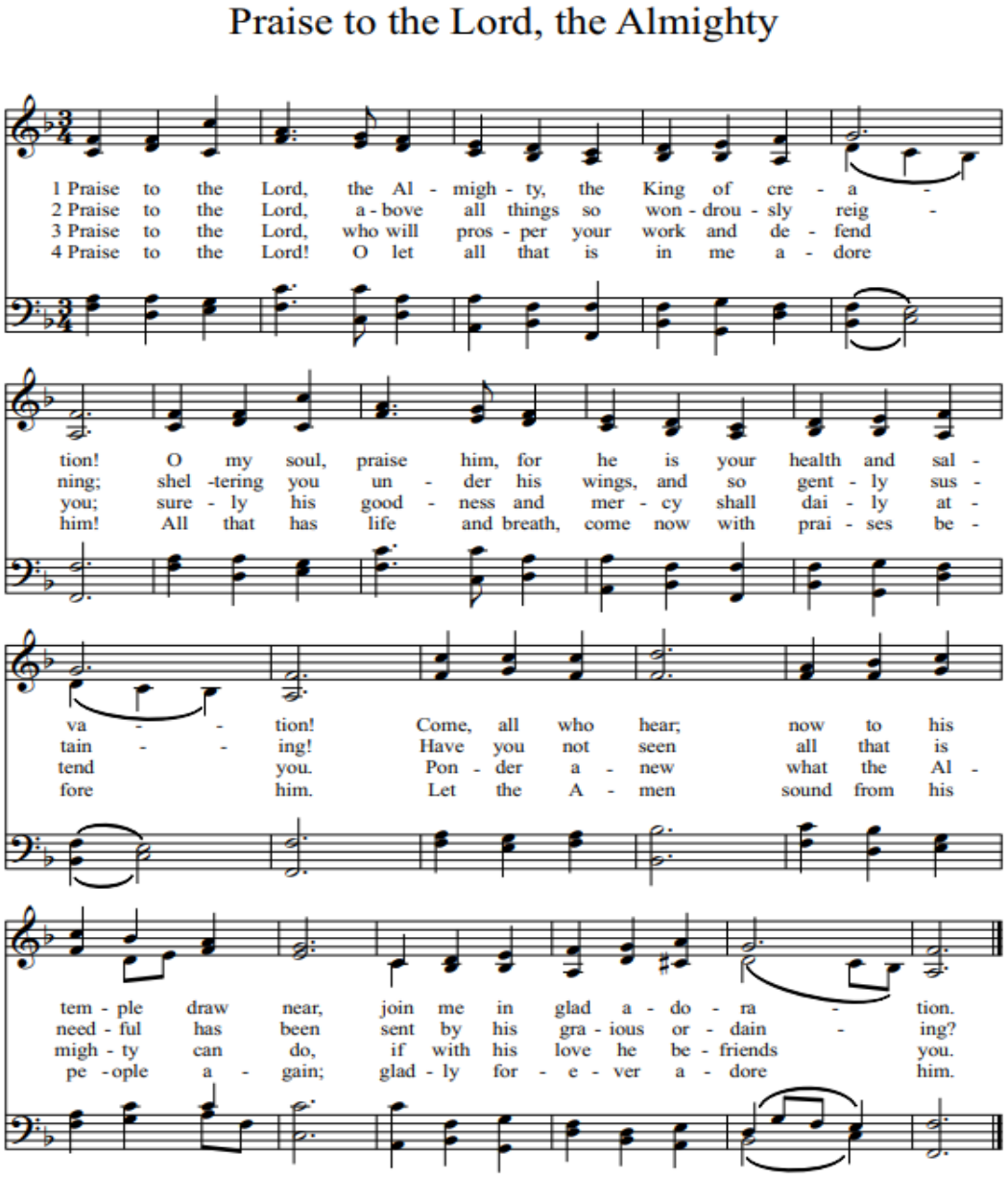
Post-Communion Prayer

God of abundance, you have fed us with the bread of life and cup of salvation; you have united us with Christ and one another; and you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue for ever in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Blessing

Celebrant
God's Blessing be with you,
Christ's peace be with you,
the Spirit's outpouring be with you,
now and always. *Amen.*

RECESSIONAL HYMN: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (H390)



Dismissal

Celebrant Let us go forth in the name of Christ.
People: Thanks be to God.

Postlude: *Go Forth in Joy* (Colin Hand)

A prayer for peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Today's Servers

Celebrants: The Revs. Kay and Joe Ashby
Parish musician: Edward Grimes
Greeters: David Lewis and Paula Hampton
Crucifer: Demetrius Carrothers
Eucharistic Minister: Douglas Colmery
Video/Photography: David Lewis, David Rotthoff
Lector: Carol Sutek
Altar Guild: Cara Warren and Susan Phillips
Counters: David Swope and Carol Sutek

Parish news and notes

Happy September Birthdays

Bradley Swinderman, 9/9
Craig May, 9/12
Joanne Miller, 9/20
John Papadeonise, 9/21
Janet Lewton, 9/23
Ellis Wade, 9/23
Judith Johanning, 9/24
Jessica Patterson, 9/25
Peter Hopkins, 9/25
The Rev. Joe Ashby, 9/25
Sutton Wade, 9/27
Carol Duncan, 9/28

Happy September Anniversaries

John and Samantha Papadeonise, 9/20
Tammy and Joe Patterson, 9/23
Molly and Sean Ryan, 9/23

The Little Chapel that Stood

The Episcopal chapel of St. Paul's was built in 1766 and stands less than 100 yards from the World Trade Center site. It became known as “The Little Chapel That Stood” after it survived the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11. A giant sycamore tree planted in St. Paul’s graveyard is believed to have saved the church, which then became a haven for rescue and recovery workers at Ground Zero.

More than 5,000 volunteers worked long hours at the church, cleaning, serving hot meals, and providing comfort to all who came to the church for rest and refuge.

A year after the tragedy, people still pinned tens of thousands of tributes on the gates of the chapel. Many of those mementos are in the archives of the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

The church is remembering the 25th anniversary of the tragedy with a special exhibition, “Ever Present:" featuring 2,977 blue origami cranes hung in the shape of an infinity symbol to honor each life lost on 9/11.

On Friday, it continued the traditions of the Bell of Hope Ringing at 8:46 a.m., precisely at the moment the first plane struck the North Tower, and the Calling of the Names Ceremony at 1:30 p.m. to honor deceased 9/11 rescue and recovery workers.

On Saturday, Nov. 21, museum visitors can meet one of the volunteers, Paula Kelberman, who will read the classic children’s book "The Little Chapel that Stood.” The daughter of two Holocaust survivors, Kelberman always felt strongly about giving back to her community. In fall 2001, she volunteered at St. Paul’s Chapel through her synagogue to aid in the recovery. She worked her 12-hours shifts mostly at nights and quickly became friends with the chapel staff and rescue and recovery workers. Her work continued until the Last Column ceremony in May 2002.

Join us for iconography: The brushstrokes of prayer

The St. Elizabeth Chapter of the Daughters of the King is inviting all St. Paul’s members to be our guests for a luncheon and special program on iconography this coming Saturday, Sept. 19. The presentation will be led by the Rev. Meghan Carlson of St. James in Wooster, who was raised in the

Ruthenian Byzantine Catholic tradition where she fell in love with the story-telling and spiritual practice of iconography.
The presentation is part of the regional Fall Assembly of the DOK, which begins with check-in at 9:30 a.m. and concludes at 2 p.m. Reservations are due Sept. 16 via the St. Paul's office, 425 Cleveland Ave. SW, Canton, OH 44702, Attn: Tammy Patterson. We're also asking you to bring cat/dog treats for donation to the St. James Pet Pantry.
Members of The Order of the Daughters of the King are a spiritual sisterhood of Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic women dedicated to prayer, service and evangelism – and a lifelong journey with Jesus Christ. Our motto is:

For His Sake…
I am but one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
What I can do, I ought to do.

De-escalation Training this Tuesday

Please join us this Tuesday, September 15, for Courageous Conversations on Race Relations (CCORR).
We will gather for a crash course on De-Escalation! Pastor George Lancaster of Zion's Temple Church of God, who also works for Canton City Schools and is one of the founders of the Interfaith Coalition, has provided de-escalation training to Canton City Police several times!
Dinner will begin @ 6 pm @ St. Paul's Episcopal Church (425

Cleveland Ave SW, Canton, OH 44702). Dinner is free! We will wrap up by 8 pm.
*If you are interested in a longer Saturday De-Escalation training this fall and cannot attend on the 15th, please send an email to Molly. Thank you!

Celebrating the congregation of St. Paul's

Next Sunday (Sept. 20), we'll be celebrating all of you and the many and varied ministries of St. Paul's.
Instead of a traditional sermon, members of the congregation will outline ministries as varied as Altar Guild, choir, Courageous Conversations, lectoring and many others. At the end of the service, we'll gather for The Big Picture, as David Rotthoff captures all of the St. Paul's family gathered to make a difference. We'll also be celebrating after service in the Guild Hall with a closer look at which of these ministries may be calling to you – and, of course, with food!

Registering now for Widening our Vision

Being Episcopalian means being part of a broader community, one that extends around the world. You can get to know part of that community better at the annual Diocese of Ohio convention, Nov. 20 and 21 at Sawmill Creek in Huron. The 210th gathering will focus on "Widening our Vision," with Friday's session beginning at 1 p.m. to allow more time for conversation and reflection. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Dwight Zscheile, a professor of Congregational Mission and Leadership and author of books such as"Embracing the Mixed Ecology: Inherited and New Forms of Christian Community Flourishing Together," and "Leading Faithful Innovation." Registration has begun; if you'd like be a delegate or alternate, please let Schultze know.

Blessing of the monarchs

Two members of the St. Paul's family – Carol Sutek and Tammy Patterson -- have made it part of their mission to aid monarch butterflies on their 2,000-mile trek to central Mexico, as the threatened and delicate insects battle everything from light pollution to pesticides to survive.
Today, join us in the Memorial Garden to add our blessings to the many hours Tammy and Carol have devoted to hand-raising the butterflies before releasing them on their journey. As Bishop Rayford Ray said of the Diocese of Northern Michigan's annual celebration of the monarchs, "Blessing is a way of saying that we see the goodness God sees."

A litany and blessing for the Monarchs

Reader: Creating God, you abundantly provide sunlight and seasons, waters and soils, plants and animals, some that creep and buzz and flutter:
Great is your love.

Cosmic Christ, you elevate lilies of the field and birds of the air as exemplars of faith in anxious times; your earth-shaking death and resurrection embrace and redeem all creation:
Great is your love.

Renewing Spirit, your brooding awakens us and all creatures with life; you summon and gift a prophetic people to do justice and walk humbly, to build relationships of across divisions and generations, and to the ends of the earth:
Great is your love.

For pollinators that reflect your beauty and dance in the laughter of flowers:
Thanks be to God.

For a rainbow of butterflies, monarchs and swallowtails, fritillaries and admirals:
Thanks be to God.

For yellow and rusty-patched, brown belted and bumbling bees, whose busywork is essential for fruitful harvests, whose sweet honey has ever signified a plentiful land:
Thanks be to God.

Help us to see these small, often overlooked and disregarded creatures as key to the earth's regeneration and ours:
Teach us your way of new life.

In this Kairos moment, O God, empower us as your people to be pollinators of your love:
Grant us your wisdom.

In the fullness of your renewal, O Spirit, embolden us to be plotters of resurrection hope.
Grant us your peace.

Officiant: Creator of all things big and small, we give you thanks for all that you created and declared that "it was good." We praise you for the pollinators, the butterflies, bees, bats, hummingbirds, and other creatures alike, that deliver pollen from plant to plant, enabling flowers. We pray for the Monarch butterfly as they bless us with their beauty. We pray for the few that are now clinging to trees preparing for their return flight home, for those we are releasing today, and for those already on their journey. May God bless them, and may they be safe and strong and fly safely through the air. May their beauty be an inspiration to all who witness the miracle of their migration. May they inspire humans to find ways to protect their species for future generations. **Amen.**