



Laurel Presbyterian Church
Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve

Welcomes You!

Lent 4

March 15, 2026, 10:00 AM

Where Love is Known

PRELUDE

James A. Sudbury

RINGING OF THE HOUR

Janice Berger

WELCOME BELOVED ONES

Beverley Shepherd

GATHERING AROUND LOVE

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

Laurel Choir

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Beverley Shepherd

Leader: For God so loved the world!

People: That we were given God's Beloved Son . . .

Leader: So that we might not squander this beautiful life!

People: But enjoy an everlasting life! (based on John 3:16).

*HYMN

Alleluia! Laud and Blessing

No. 755

RECEIVING LOVE

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Healing God, you have sent your Son into the world, but we know him not. The foolishness of the cross does not make sense to us, and we miss the signs you have put in our midst to show us the way to love. Our Suffering Servant asks us to drink from his cup, but we prefer to drink from our own. Our Suffering Servant shows us the way to walk in the light, but we prefer to huddle in the dark. Our Suffering Servant shows us how to live unburdened by our humanity and our guilt, but we prefer our doubts, and our fears, to his larger truth. Our Suffering Servant shows us how to love God's world, but we prefer to condemn ourselves and each other rather than pick up

our own cross and try to follow. Free us from all that keeps us shackled in darkness, from all that stops us short from living inside your bigger Love, and from all that keeps us from enjoying you, each other, and your creation, for we pray this through the grace of our Suffering Servant, who is and was and always will be, our Christ. Amen.

SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION. . . AMEN.

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Leader: Cherished People of God; Hear the good news! We are made from cosmic material, and because we are, we can always return again and again to recover our true identities in you.

People: **With great gratitude, we return ourselves to you to reclaim our identity as your Beloved Ones—to live as your God-Directed people.**

*OUR RESPONSE

Gloria Patri

Hymn No. 581

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

PROCLAIMING LOVE

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 21: 4-9 ((NRSVue)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

MUSICAL MEDITATION

A Time for Everything

Laurel Choir

SCRIPTURE

John 3: 14-21 (NRSVue)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

SERMON

"Snakes"

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench

BEING LOVE IN THE WORLD

*HYMN

Change My Heart, O God

No. 695 (two times)

*PROFESSION OF FAITH

Philippians 2: 5-11

Beverley Shepherd

We profess that Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even on a cross.

Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

*OUR RESPONSE

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Hymn No. 606

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench

Leader: We pray that you would return us to our true identities so we might live from your generous flow of love within.

Silence

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that you would soften our hearts so we might say "yes!" to all that you do.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that we might "be light" even in this present darkness—even into our own darkness.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that we might "be instruments of your peace" when the world is shattering before us—even into our own shatterings.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that we might “hold joy” even when we see so much suffering—even into our own suffering.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that we might “be love” even when challenged by our most challenging neighbors—even when it is hard to stomach—even into our most unlovable places.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that we might “trust” you, and “**of who you say we are in you;**” and we ask that you deepen our understanding, and practice of, living as “precious, honored, and oh so loved.”

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray for all those who are dealing with harsh realities, enduring medical challenges, grief, isolation, uncertainty, unforgiving timelines, sleep deprivation, addiction, housing and food deserts, lack of resources for medical support, and those who are emotionally under the weather or feeling unloved—and we pray that you would hold us tenderly—surfacing tangible forms of comfort, deepening our trust in you, while finding ways for us to be merciful.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: For we dare to pray all these things in the name of our Suffering Servant, who taught us to pray:

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; 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.

BEARING LOVE INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN	<i>"Sleepers, Wake!" A Voice Astounds Us</i>	No. 349
*CHARGE AND BLESSING		The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench
*POSTLUDE		James A. Sudbury
*RECESSION AND GREETING		The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench

***Please feel free to sit, stand, and move during our worship service.**

****Please wait to greet each other until the worship leaders have recessed down the aisle.**

Welcome to The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench: We are thrilled to welcome back to our pulpit our fan favorite, The Rev. Dr. Roger Gench. Dr. Gench is a theological heavyweight and preacher in our denomination.

Gratitude to our Liturgist: Thank you to Beverley Shepherd for serving as our liturgist today.

Gratitude for the Steady Presence of Laurel Love: Thank you to Carolyn Stinger for her copy editing, Billy Shepherd for tending to our church sign, Mary Scarce, Beverley Shepherd and Carolyn for our printing, Brenda and Pete MacRae, for serving as our newsletter editors, Brenda MacRae, our website master, and Tod Balsbuagh, Marshall Chamberlayne, Wayne Alvis and Pete MacRae for tending to our building and grounds.

All Are Welcome! The signature gift of Laurel Love is our affection and love for God and for one another.

Laurel Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Ann D. Cherry, Minister
 Marcy Deisher, Treasurer
 Peter MacRae, Bookkeeper
 Gladys Chamberlayne, Elder, MCM Team
 Julie Messick, Elder, VTF
 Thomas Miller, Elder, WE Team

James A. Sudbury, Director of Music
 Jill Day, Clerk
 Rebecca Owen, Elder, MCM Team
 Rudy Van't Riet, Elder, SP Team
 Bill Shepherd, Elder, SP Team

You can contact Rev. Ann D. Cherry at (804) 873-1990 or at laurelpres.cherry@gmail.com

You can reach James Sudbury at (661) 466-7347 or at jamesandrewsudbury@gmail.com

Open your camera to capture the QR code to make a safe online donation to Laurel.



Where Love is Known

P.O. Box 1280, Glen Allen, VA 23060-1280 / laurelpres.com

“You are precious in my sight and honored and oh so loved.” Isaiah 43:4