



Laurel Presbyterian Church

Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve

Welcomes You!

9th Sunday After Pentecost

July 26, 2026, 10:00 AM

Where Love is Known

PRELUDE

James Sudbury

RINGING OF THE HOUR

Janice Berger

WELCOME BELOVED ONES

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

GATHERING AROUND LOVE

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

James Sudbury

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Mary Searce

Leader: Sing to the Lord!

People: We sing praises to the Lord, our God.

Leader: Choose to love with every inch of our being.

People: We see how God loves us.

Leader: Seek God's presence in everyone and every living thing.

People: We will never give up choosing to honor what God honors.

*HYMN

We Praise You, O God

No. 612

RECEIVING LOVE

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Unwavering God, whose mercy is bottomless and whose wisdom timeless, hear our prayers today, as we bring our lives before you. You love us steadfastly, even with all of our flaws, even with all of our expectations, even when we can be anything but lovable. But, we have trouble "choosing" to love ourselves as you love us and to

“choose” to love our neighbor as ourselves. You talk to us in story so our hearts might be awakened and captured by your truth. But our ears are unable to untangle your unbounding and merciful words, and our eyes are unable to see your deeds of grace. Forgive all the ways we put you in boxes or create conditions for how you love, so it lets us off the hook of honoring what you love. “Give us God-blessed eyes that really see and God-blessed ears that really hear.” Give us compassion when we don’t. Nudge us toward a “welcome awakening,” for all these things we pray in the name of Jesus, who is, and was, and always will be, our Christ.

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 truth in you.

People: **With great gratitude, we return ourselves to you to reclaim our identity in you—trusting you to untangle us from our distortions and to deepen us into your love-led 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. Ann D. Cherry

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 (NRSVue)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

MUSICAL DEVOTION

“Amazing Grace”

Laurel Choir

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13: 10-17 (The Message)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

SERMON

“Untangling”

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

RESPONDING IN LOVE

*HYMN

I Love you Lord

No. 627

*PROFESSION OF FAITH

The Belhar Confession

Mary Searce

We believe in the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; We believe that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ.

We believe that God's life-giving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's life-giving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world.

*OUR RESPONSE

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Hymn No. 606

SATURATED IN LOVE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

Leader: We pray that you would untangle us from all of our expectations of who you are and who we are as your people. Bless us to see and hear clearly so we might be awakened to your Love.

Silence**Leader:** Lord in your mercy.**All: Hear our prayers.**

Leader: We pray that you would nudge us to talk more regularly to you, to fill our hearts with longing, and our actions with your grace.

Silence

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We thank you for all that is lovely, gracious, and true.

Silence

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that you would continue to help us express “Laurel Love” in real ways—by helping us to grow deeper and deeper into your image as a beloved community, so we might live as Christ to one another and to your larger world.

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 be surprised by “joy” even when we know so much suffering—even into our own suffering.

Silence.

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray for all those who are recovering from surgeries, healing from cancer, carrying all the burdens, addressing harsh realities, enduring medical challenges, gripping grief, isolation, uncertainty, unforgiving timelines, sleep deprivation, addiction, housing and food deserts, lack of resources for basic needs, and for all the caregivers. We pray for those who are emotionally under the weather or feeling unloved—and we pray that you would hold us

tenderly—surfacing tangible forms of comfort, 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 Great Parable and Teacher, 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

To My Precious Lord

No. 704

CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

PRESENTATION OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Gladys Chamberlayne, Chair

*THE CHARGE AND BLESSING

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

*POSTLUDE

James Sudbury

*RECESSION AND GREETING

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

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

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

Gratitude to our Liturgist: Thank you to Mary Searce 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 Searce, Beverley Shepherd and Carolyn for our printing, Brenda MacRae, our website master, and Wayne Alvis, Tod Balsbough, Marshall Chamberlayne, Glenda Miller and Fran Tredway for tending to our building and grounds.

Called Congregational Meeting Today: A brief Congregational Meeting has been called by the Session for the purpose of electing our Nominating Committee who will bring before us our next slate of elders. Those agreeing to serve are Mary Jane Bowlin, Gladys Chamberlayne (chair), Bernie Cheatman, Margaret Fitch and Carolyn Stinger. If you would like to self-nominate or elect someone from the floor, just be sure to garner their permission before doing so.

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

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52, *New Revised Standard Version, updated edition*

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Matthew 13: 10-17, *The Message*

The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?"

He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward a welcome awakening. In their present state they

can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it. I don't want Isaiah's forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing.

The people are stupid!

They stick their fingers in their ears

so they won't have to listen;

They screw their eyes shut

so they won't have to look,

so they won't have to deal with me face-to-face

and let me heal them.

"But you have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance.

Notes: What makes you pause? Wonder? More curious?

Laurel Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry, Minister

James A. Sudbury, Director of Music

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Growing Deeper Together

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