



Laurel Presbyterian Church

Enter to Worship, Depart to Serve

Welcomes You!

13th Sunday After Pentecost

August 23, 2026, 10:00 AM

Where Love is Known

PRELUDE

James A. Sudbury

RINGING OF THE HOUR

Janice Berger

WELCOME BELOVED ONES

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

GATHERING AROUND LOVE

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP

James A. Sudbury

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Mary Searce

Leader: Behold, our God is doing a new thing.

People: Here. Now. In the midst of our habits, routines and ordinariness.

Leader: Let us pay attention to this gift.

People: Let us honor it by adding our “Amen” by becoming ONE with God!

Leader: Let our very lives shout out this good news:

People: Behold, our God is creating a new thing in us, in Laurel, and in this world!

*HYMN

All Things Bright and Beautiful

No. 20 (Red Hymnal)

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. Sometimes, when we look at you and at who you are in us—it is still all mystery, just like the daily Wordle. We have hints

about who you are, but we don't fully grasp it. Like Peter, we know and in a flash and then we don't. And yet as Peter was dubbed "the Rock," and Mary, "the Tower," we too want to be a steady presence of your Love in our world. Spare us from confusing you with the many idols that our culture reveres. Have mercy on us when we do. Give us the longing to stay in the flow of your love even if we are baffled and wonder "how can this be?" alongside Jesus' mother. For we pray all of these things in the name of Jesus, the true Sign of Jonah, 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 give ourselves back to you to be rejuvenated in your image—trusting you to teach us how to shoulder the mystery of Love as you deepen us into your love-led people.**

*OUR RESPONSE

Gloria Patri

Hymn No. 581 (*Red Hymnal*)

*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

Romans 12: 1-8 (CEV)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

MUSICAL DEVOTION

James A. Sudbury

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16: 13-20 (The Message)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

SERMON

"Our Wordle"

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

RESPONDING IN LOVE

*HYMN

Amazing Grace

No. 649 (*Red Hymnal*)

*PROFESSION OF FAITH

A Brief Statement of Faith

Mary Searce

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

*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. Give us the grace to sustain your mystery. Allow us to carry it in us as you awaken us more and more to your surprising Love.

Silence

Leader: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayers.

Leader: We pray that you would draw us in closer to you. Nudge us to talk more regularly with 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 Greatest Sign of
Jonah—Jesus, 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, the Lord of Sea and Sky

No. 69 (*Red Hymnal*)

*THE CHARGE AND BLESSING

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry

*POSTLUDE

James A. 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 Tod Balsbaugh, Marshall Chamberlayne, Glenda Miller, Steve Searce, Billy Shepherd, and Fran Tredway 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.

Romans 12: 1-8, Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to *God* as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That's the most sensible way to serve God. Don't be like the people of this world but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to *God*. I realize God has treated me with undeserved grace, and so I tell each of you not to think you are better than you really are. Use good sense and measure yourself by the amount of faith that God has given you. A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another.

God has also given each of us different gifts to use. If we can prophesy, we should do it according to the amount of faith we have. If we can serve others, we should serve. If we can teach, we should teach. If we can encourage others, we should encourage them. If we can give, we should be generous. If we are leaders, we should do our best. If we are good to others, we should do it cheerfully.

Matthew 16: 13-20, *The Message*

When Jesus arrived in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "What are people saying about who the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." He pressed them, "And how about you? Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter said, "You're the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus came back, "God bless you, Simon, son of Jonah! You didn't get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am. And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out." And that's not all. You will have complete and free access to God's kingdom, keys to open any and every door: no more barriers between heaven and earth, earth and heaven. A yes on earth is yes in heaven. A no on earth is no in heaven." He swore the disciples to secrecy. He made them promise they would tell no one that he was the Messiah.

Laurel Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Dr. Ann D. Cherry, Minister

James A. Sudbury, Director of Music

You can contact Ann 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.



Growing Deeper Together

laurelpres.com

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