

Worship Leader Guide

DATE: Sunday, August 24, 2025, 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Series:

Preacher: Dwight Welch
Worship Leader: Deb C
Liturgist: Stacy C
Accompanist: Leigh Ann C
Greeters/Ushers:
Media Technicians: Tammy M
Nursery Attendant: Shirley C

[9:55 AM]

PRELUDE “Amazing Grace” by Robert J. Hughes - Leigh Ann Corcoran, Minister of Music

[10:00 AM]

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME & WORDS OF GRACE

Deb: The Lord be with you!

I am Deborah Cox, Grace's Lay Leader, and I use she/her pronouns, and I am glad that you are starting this Sunday morning here at Grace UMC. It is a joy to welcome you today whether you are here in our sanctuary today or joining us on livestream. We know we have a wonderful, diverse group of folks that come to worship with us online.

Friends, no matter where you come from today, or where you go at the close of this service, no matter what you believe or doubt, no matter what you feel or don't feel today, no matter your immigration status, no matter whom you love, you're welcome to come just as you are to be met by our God who knows you by name and who loves you and who wants to have an ever closer relationship with you. You are welcome here.

Let's pray: Holy One, even when the days are heavy, make us persistent in pursuit of all that is good and just. When it feels as if our prayers go unheard and we cannot find you to our left or to our right, let not our hearts grow weary. Though we may be pressed by fatigue, fear, or despair, give us the endurance to remain faithful. Make us relentless pursuers of your Kin-dom, settling for nothing less than what you have promised us. Through Christ, our Companion, we pray. Amen.

Liturgist: Please stand as you are able and comfortable and join me in the Call to Worship.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: We come, like Abraham, Sarah, and John the Baptist, people with vision.

Many: We come, like Job, Thomas, and the Samaritan woman, people with questions.

One: We come, like Moses, Jeremiah, and Mary, people with self-doubts.

Many: We come, like Stephen, Deborah, and Esther, people with courage.

One: We come, like David, Mary Magdalene, and Paul, people with regrets.

Many: We come, like Hagar, Uriah, and Rahab, people with wisdom from the margins.

One: We come as people with a part to play in the story of faith.

Liturgist: Let's lift our voices together in our opening hymn from the red hymnal page 144, This Is My Father's World.

***OPENING HYMN:** UMH #144 This Is My Father's World

This is my Father's world,
and to my listening ears
All nature sings and round me rings
the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world;
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world,
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their maker's praise.
This is my Father's world;
He shines on all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear him pass;
He speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world.
O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
Why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King;
Let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let the earth be glad.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Liturgist: You may be seated. Let's pray:
God of steadfast love and courageous hope,
open our hearts as we hear your Word.
When fear tempts us to be silent, give us Esther's boldness.
When uncertainty clouds our vision, tune our hearts to sing your praise.
Speak now, and make us ready to trust you,
for your mercy is higher than the heavens
and your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Amen.

FIRST LESSON Psalm 103:1-8

Liturgist: Today's first lesson comes from Psalm 103:1-8.

Let my whole being bless the Creator!
Let everything inside me bless God's holy name!

² Let my whole being bless the Lord
and never forget all the good deeds:
³ how God forgives all your sins,
heals all your sickness,
⁴ saves your life from the pit,
crowns you with faithful love and compassion,
⁵ and satisfies you with plenty of good things
so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's.
⁶ God works righteousness;
does justice for all who are oppressed.
⁷ God made their ways known to Moses;
made their deeds known to the Israelites.
⁸ God is compassionate and merciful,
very patient, and full of faithful love.

One: This is the Word of God for the people of God.
Many: Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Kristen S

PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Deb: Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

JOY & CONCERNS

Deb: As we make our way back to our seats, we will move into a time of prayer. Are there joys and concerns that you would like to lift, so that we can be in prayer and praise with each other today and in this coming week?

PRAYER HYMN UMH #117 O God, Our Help in Ages Past

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!

Under the shadow of thy throne,
Still may we dwell secure,
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame
From everlasting, thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages, in thy sight,
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night,
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever rolling stream
Bears all who breathe away;

They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.
O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come;
Be thou our guide while life shall last,
And our eternal home.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Deb:

Holy and loving God, you gather us in from many places, with many stories, and call us your beloved. We come before you today with gratitude for your Spirit that moves among us and with honesty about the needs of our world.

We pray for your Church—here and everywhere— that we may be a community of welcome, courage, and compassion. Keep us from becoming comfortable in silence when our neighbors cry out for justice. Help us to be salt and light, bearers of hope, and witnesses to your love that has no boundaries.

We pray for this world you created, aching from the harm we have done. For lands scorched by fire, for waters rising, for communities displaced, for species disappearing and ecosystems unraveling— teach us to live gently, to honor creation, and to work for climate justice.

We pray for leaders—of nations, cities, and neighborhoods— that they may seek the common good, that they may dismantle systems of oppression and build policies rooted in equity and care. Give them wisdom, courage, and compassion.

We pray for those who are hurting in body, mind, or spirit: For the sick and those awaiting diagnosis, for the weary caregivers, for those struggling with addiction or mental illness, for all who live with pain, seen or unseen. Surround them with your healing presence.

We lift up those who are marginalized and pushed aside: our queer siblings, our Black and brown siblings, immigrants and refugees, the unhoused and the unemployed, the incarcerated and those returning home. Remind them—and us—that your love is fierce, unshakable, and for everyone.

We pray for peace in places torn by violence and war— from distant lands to our own streets. Protect the innocent, comfort the grieving, and stir in us the courage to be peacemakers in our daily lives.

And finally, we pray for ourselves: for our doubts and our faith, our weariness and our joy, our longing to follow you more faithfully. Renew us, strengthen us, and send us out to be your hands and feet in this world that longs for love. We offer these prayers, spoken and unspoken, trusting in the One who taught us to pray, saying:

LORD'S PRAYER

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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

Deb: In the story of Esther, courage meets opportunity, and God's purposes unfold through human hands. In Psalm 108, we hear a heart determined to give thanks and trust God's unfailing love. Today, as we bring our gifts, we step into that same story—choosing courage, trusting God's faithfulness, and giving so that hope can rise in places of despair. Let us offer our gifts with grateful and willing hearts.

*DOXOLOGY UMH #95

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Deb:

Let's pray:
Faithful God,
as you moved through Esther to bring justice,
move through us and these gifts to bring mercy and hope.
Take what we give and multiply it,
so that your steadfast love may reach beyond these walls
and your faithfulness be known to the ends of the earth.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SECOND LESSON Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

¹ So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ² On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ³ Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. ⁴ For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace, but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king."^[a] ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" ⁶ Esther said, "A foe and an enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very pole that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king,^[a] stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." ¹⁰ So they hung Haman on the pole that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, ²¹ enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, ²² as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday, that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

One: This is the word of God for the people of God.

Many: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE

The Story of Esther and Today

Dwight Welch, UCM Director at MSUB

***CLOSING HYMN** UMH #127 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Guide me O thou great Jehovah
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak but thou are mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me til I want no more;
Feed me til I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield;
Be thou still my strength and shield

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

***CHARGE AND BLESSING** Dwight Welch

POSTLUDE "The Path of the Just" by Ed Broughton - Leigh Ann Corcoran, Minister of Music