

ORDER OF SERVICE

6 September, 2020
14th Sunday after Pentecost
Arusha Community Church



One more month. Then we'll be reunited in body. Until that time, our congregation continues to gather in spirit on Sundays, upholding one another in prayer, living as the Church in the light of day.

Those of us in Arusha who can are asked to worship outside on our verandas this week, beginning at 10:30 am, warming our hearts under the same sun. From Ilboru down to Olasiti, and Kisongo across to Moshono, let our songs ring out as one. Together, we shall overcome this season of despair.

Scripture, hymns and rites for our celebration are provided below. People with internet access can view videos with music, vocals and lyrics by tapping on the blue hyperlinks. Bread and wine, or grape juice, are needed for communion. If you wish, sit in comfortable chairs around a coffee table.

An optional children's message is included, and coloring sheets to keep small hands busy during worship are attached separately. Parents might want to print that two-page document in advance.

Offerings can be contributed to the ACC M-PESA number (+255 755 992 394) at any time, in the name of Nasieku Mollel, our church administrator, or deposited directly into our account at Exim Bank (Number 003 002 3252). We continue to support urgent needs with these funds.

ACC also hosts a communal prayer hour on Sunday evenings via WhatsApp, beginning at 5:00 pm. To join the group, click on this link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Hsgx0VqthgbJNF8Y993tWa>

GATHERING

Convocation Hymn: MP 449, "Love divine, all loves excelling"

Jesus told his disciples that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he would be with them. We call on our Father now to send his Spirit among us, however scattered we may be.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPsxqQsnzJA>

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| <p>1. Love divine, all loves excelling
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling
All Thy faithful mercies crown
Jesus, Thou art all compassion
Pure, unbounded love Thou art
Visit us with Thy salvation
Enter every trembling heart</p> <p>2. Come, almighty to deliver
Let us all Thy life receive
Suddenly return, and never
Never more Thy temples leave</p> | <p>Thou we would be always blessing
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing
Glory in Thy perfect love</p> <p>3. Finish then Thy new creation
Pure and spotless let us be
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee
Changed from glory into glory
Till in heav'n we take our place
Till we cast our crowns before Thee
Lost in wonder, love, and praise</p> |
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Penitential Rite: Led by service leader

We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: **Amen.**

May the love of our Creator, grace of our Redeemer and fellowship of our Sanctifier be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

To prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins and seek God's forgiveness.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the times we have failed to recognize you in our midst, we pray:

ALL: **Lord have mercy.**

For the times we have not loved you with all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds, we pray:

ALL: **Christ have mercy.**

For the times we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves, we pray:

ALL: **Lord have mercy.**

May almighty God hear these pleas, forgive our sins, and bring us to life everlasting.

ALL: **Amen.**

Opening Prayer: Led by service leader or participant

Holy God, you call us to righteousness and light. As we gather to break bread, teach us your undivided law of love, so that we learn to love our neighbors as ourselves and to love you with all of our strength. Grant that we may be one with Jesus the Emmanuel in offering you this sacrifice of praise.

ALL: **Amen.**

Responsorial: Psalm 119:33-40 led by service leader or participant

³³ Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end.

ALL: ³⁴ **Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.**

³⁵ Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

ALL: ³⁶ **Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.**

³⁷ Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

ALL: ³⁸ **Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you may be feared.**

³⁹ Take away the disgrace I dread, for your laws are good.

ALL: ⁴⁰ **How I long for your precepts! In your righteousness preserve my life.**

THE WORD

We receive God's Word from Paul, Matthew and our preacher, Reverend Doctor Cynthia Holder Rich.

Epistle Reading: Romans 13:8-14 read aloud by participant

Love Fulfills the Law

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are

summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Day Is Near

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is the Word of our Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

Acclamation Hymn: Mission Praise No. 1350, "Speak, O Lord"

Lord, teach us full obedience. Speak till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

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| <p>1. Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes, for Your glory</p> <p>2. Teach us, Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity</p> | <p>Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of power that can never fail
let their truth prevail over unbelief</p> <p>3. Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory</p> |
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Gospel Reading: Matthew 18:15-20 read aloud by participant

Dealing With Sin in the Church

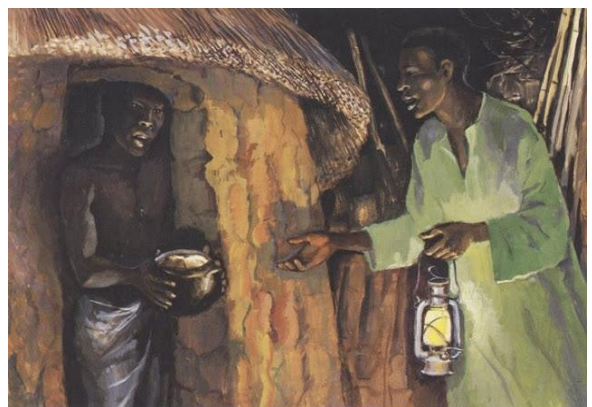
¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

This is the Gospel of our Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**



Sermon: Presented by Pastor Cynthia in MP4a audio file format, or read aloud by participant

Living as the Church in the Light of Day

We are living through challenging times.

In the US – with Coronavirus cases and deaths rising, unemployment for millions of people, protesters on the streets in many cities confronting the reality of racial injustice, a presidential election campaign that has divided the nation, and many pastors and church members upset about whether and how they should return to in person worship – life is certainly challenging.

We hear from our Tanzanian friends, colleagues, and students that life has in many ways returned to normal. And, Tanzania has its own national elections this year, many people are out of work, particularly in the tourism industry, and challenges from poverty to disease to injustice continue for many people.

Our scriptures today have a lot to say about how to live as the church in challenging times. The Gospel shares that Jesus is with us whenever two or three are gathered – so this truth impacts how we must live with each other. When there is offense – Matthew says “if”, but this passage only made it past the editing process because there had already been offense – so when there is offense, the church has to follow a system that aims at restoration.

Paul speaks to how we who follow Jesus have to know what time it is – how we have to awake from sleep, lay aside the works of the night, put on the armor of light, and live honorably in the day. Paul calls us to put on Jesus.

In times like ours, one normal human response is to **focus all our energy on protecting those closest to us** – our families, our homes, our jobs, our lives. This is the approach that many rich people, both in Tanzania and the US, have taken to the global pandemic.

Another normal response to this level of stress is **to strike out** – particularly at those closest to us. One result of this response is that rates of domestic violence – mostly of wife-beating and child abuse in the home – have skyrocketed during the pandemic.

Still another is to **look for ways to relieve stress**. One way this approach has become visible can be seen in Kenya, where the numbers of teenage girls who are pregnant have risen precipitously. As a woman scholar and pastor, I can tell you both from personal experience of being a girl and from the work of many researchers that many of these girls were not willing sexual partners – they were used by some man in their lives as a way to relieve stress, resulting in the girls’ lives and future prospects being completely changed.

THE QUESTION FOR US TODAY IS: HOW CAN WE BE THE CHURCH IN CHALLENGING TIMES?

Here are some ideas. After listening, you will have a chance to discuss what ideas these scriptures raise for you.

We who follow Jesus are called to something different. My mother had a poster in her study that quoted southern American author Flannery O’Connor, which said, “You shall know the truth and the truth will make you odd.” We are called to be odd – we are called to be different.

We are called to look at the challenging times in which we live and seek ways together to faithfully proclaim and share the good news of Jesus in whatever ways people need to hear, receive, taste, see, and experience the gospel as good news.

We are called to look unflinchingly at the truth of the present moment, and to seek ways to follow Jesus unflinchingly in that moment.

We have to be honest. We are called to be honest. Jesus calls us to open our eyes and see the truth, see where people are hurting, see what needs to be done, and then we are called to go and do what Jesus calls us to do.

We are called to be awake. Even when we are scared, and tired, and overwhelmed – we are called to be awake and to stay awake, for Jesus' coming means that it is daytime now. It is Easter morning, friends! We live in a different reality, because we know the truth!

We owe love to everyone we meet. We particularly owe it to each other.

What does it mean to love a pregnant schoolgirl who has been thrown out by her family, and who may wonder if she has a future at all?

What does it mean to share Jesus' love with a wife who is being beaten by her husband?

What does it mean to be the church in times when people are afraid and are striking out, or looking to relieve stress, or trying to escape and avoid reality?

We are called to be the church in the light of these days.

How is Jesus calling us – and you – and me to carry out this work?

Exploration: Dialogue among participants on discussion questions provided by Pastor Cynthia

1. How does knowing that Jesus is with us when we are together impact what we do with each other and how we are with each other?
2. What would it look like if someone put on Jesus? What changes would happen for that person and for those around him or her?
3. What do you think your family is called to in these challenging times? What do you think ACC is called to in these challenging times?

Celebration Hymn: "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

A contemporary version of the poem written by Henry van Dyke and set to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" melody from his Symphony No. 9. Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYKP2p6uEkM>

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee
God of glory, Lord of love
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee
Hail Thee as the sun above
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness
Drive the dark of doubt away
Giver of immortal gladness
Fill us with the light of day2. All Thy works with joy surround Thee
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays
Stars and angels sing around Thee
Center of unbroken praise
Field and forest, vale and mountain
Blossoming meadow, flashing sea
Chanting bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in Thee

<i>You bring us joy, joy, joy
We adore Thee
(Repeat once)</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Thou art giving and forgiving
Ever blessing, ever blest
Wellspring of the joy of living
Ocean depth of happy rest
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother
All who live in love are Thine
Teach us how to love each other
Lift us to the joy divine4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus
Which the morning stars began
Father love is reigning o'er us
Brother love binds man to man
Ever singing, march we onward
Victors in the midst of strife
Joyful music leads us sunward
In the triumph song of life

<i>You bring us joy, joy, joy
We adore Thee
(Repeat three times)
We adore Thee
(Repeat twice)</i> |
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SHARING

Children's Message: "What is the Church? An Explanation for Kids"

Optional short animated video with family discussion questions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INsNTdaBIG8>

Communal Prayer: Led by service leader and shared by all

God of salvation, you sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost. Hear our prayers on behalf of those who are suffering today. Receive these petitions with your unending compassion.

If speaking aloud, conclude with "Lord in your mercy," so that others can add "hear our prayer."



Pray in your own words:

- *for a rapid end to the spread of Coronavirus COVID-19*
- *for all who are sick and the many who serve them*
- *for friends who grieve, especially here in Arusha*
- *for distant congregation members and family*
- *for peace and justice all over the world*
- *for any other concerns on your heart*

Redeeming Sustainer, visit your people with a brilliant light, that we may hurry to make you welcome, not only in our concern for others but by serving them generously in your name.

ALL: **Amen.**

Affirmation Hymn: "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying / I Love You, Lord"

This medley is well known by our Sunday School students, who have sung it to us often.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qp5Ck6BsWJQ>

Lord, listen to your children praying
Lord, send your Spirit in this place
Oh Lord, listen to your children praying
Send us love, send us power, send us grace
Send us love, send us power, send us grace
(Repeat once)

I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice
To worship You, Oh my soul rejoice
Take joy, my King, in what You hear
Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear
(Repeat once)

Peace Exchange: Led by service leader and shared by all

The peace of the Lord be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

We turn now to one another and offer a sign of God's peace.



COMMUNION

Holy Communion: Presented by Pastor Cynthia in MP4a audio file format, or led by service leader

Let us pray: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. In mercy for our fallen world, you gave your only Son, so that all who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life. We give thanks for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his Holy Supper.

ALL: Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

On the night he was betrayed, our Lord took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Again, after supper, he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people, for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the words that Jesus taught us, we pray:

ALL: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Distribution of bread and wine: "The body and blood of Christ, broken and shed for you."

For the love, grace and fellowship of our Lord, let us pray:

ALL: We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. Strengthen us by the power of your Holy Spirit, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Meditation Hymn: "They'll Know We Are Christians" (By Our Love)

First recorded on the South Side of Chicago fifty-four years ago, this title comes from a phrase non-believers used to describe Christians of the early Church: "Behold, see how they love one another."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEwb51LawAI>

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| 1. We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity
May one day be restored
<i>And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love</i> | <i>And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love
They'll know us by our love, our love
Our love, our love
They'll know us by our love, our love
Our love, our love</i> |
| 2. We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news
That God is in our land | 3. We will work with each other
We will work side by side
We will work with each other
We will work side by side
And we'll guard each other's dignity
And save each other's pride |

*And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians
By our love*

They'll know us by our love, our love
Our love, our love
They'll know us by our love, our love
Our love, our love

O-o-oh, o-o-o-oh,
O-o-oh, o-o-oh
O-o-oh, o-o-o-oh,
O-o-oh, o-o-oh
O-o-oh, o-o-o-oh,
O-o-oh, o-o-oh

*They will know we are Christians
By our love, by our love
Yes they'll know we are Christians
By our love*

SENDING

Challenge: An excerpt from “Loving Your Enemies” read aloud by participant

Part of a sermon written in 1962 by Martin Luther King Jr. while imprisoned for leading a prayer vigil on the steps of a city hall. He and colleague Ralph Abernathy were held without charge for fifteen days.

Forgiveness Is the Foundation of Reconciliation

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. Rather, it means that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to a relationship. Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning. It is the lifting of a burden or the cancelling of a debt.

“I forgive you, but will never forget what you’ve done” cannot explain the real nature of forgiveness. Certainly one can never forget, if that means totally erasing the wrong from one’s mind. But when we forgive, we forget in the sense that the evil deed is no longer a mental block impeding a relationship. Likewise, we can never say, “I forgive you, but I won’t have anything further to do with you.”

Forgiveness means reconciliation, a coming together again. Without this, no one can love an enemy. The degree to which we are able to forgive determines the degree to which we are able to love.

Closing Prayer: Led by service leader or participant

God of compassion, you sent Jesus to proclaim a time of mercy, reaching out to those who had no voice, releasing all who were trapped by shame, and welcoming those scorned by society.

ALL: Make us ambassadors of reconciliation.

Open our ears that we may listen with respect and understanding.

ALL: Touch our lips that we may speak your words of peace and forgiveness.

Let us bring wholeness to the broken-hearted and dissolve the barriers of division.

ALL: Guide the work of your servants here and renew us with the Spirit of your love.

Help us and all people to shape a world where everyone belongs, where the flames of hatred and bile are quenched, and where we can live as your Church in the light of day.

ALL: Forgive, restore and strengthen us, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Benediction Hymn: MP 329, “In Christ there is no east or west”

A familiar standard to ACC members, this clip comes from St. Martin-in-the-Fields on Trafalgar Square in London. We sing out again with Christians around the world, one great fellowship of love.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpITJOShix0&t>

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| 1. In Christ there is no east or west
In Him no south or north
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth | 3. Join hands then, people of the faith
Whate'er your race may be
Who serves my Father as His child
Is surely kin to me |
| 2. In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding humankind | 4. In Christ now meet both east and west
In Him meet south and north
All Christ-like souls are one in Him,
Throughout the whole wide earth |

Dismissal: Led by service leader

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

ALL: **Thanks be to God.**

Pancake Mix: For people who brunch after worship and enjoy music while they prep

American David Leonard leads his church in worship from home these days, which prompted the recent release of “Open House Sessions,” intimate covers of four popular Christian songs.

“Build My Life,” originally written and recorded by Housefires with Pat Barrett

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cv_vpFhSk4U

“Stand in Your Love,” originally written and recorded by Bethel Music and Josh Baldwin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FryHT8B099Y>

“Heart of Worship,” originally written and recorded by Matt Redman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZQ65-Yy7s0>

“Way Maker,” originally written and recorded by Nigerian gospel singer Sinach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGMgHssjhlk>

