“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, That whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”—John 3:16

Opening Response
Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God.
All: You are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and to grant more than we desire or deserve.
May we rejoice in your presence and know your abiding love.

Psalm Reading
Psalm 68:32–35
Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens, who thunders with mighty voice.
Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the heavens.
You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to God’s people.
Praise be to God!

Scripture Reading
John 17:1–11
After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.
I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They
were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.”

A Connected Church

It’s not often that we get a straight-forward definition of eternal life, but here it is, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (17:3). How many times have we heard this depiction of eternal life? I would wager rarely, if at all. On this last week of Easter, in the season of the resurrection, here is an idea about eternal life that just might stand out and mean something beyond the empty tomb and the lilies and “Jesus Christ is Risen Today.” Eternal life is to know God and Jesus. What if it is that simple? How would that change what we imagine in this life? How would it affect our thoughts about and beliefs in our future life with God? How does this alter even our picture of God? Of course, what it means to “know” God is key, and to know God in the Fourth Gospel has no connection to cognitive constructions, creedal consents, or specified knowledge about God. Rather, knowing God is synonymous with being in a relationship with God.

It is, perhaps, one of the most relevant and truthful definitions of what Pentecost is supposed to be as disciples of Christ. Jesus is no longer in the world. The incarnation is over. Jesus has been resurrected. He ascended to the Father from whence he came. But we are still in the world, Jesus’ works are now in our hands, and Jesus is counting on us to be his presence in the wake of his absence.

What if we imagined that the resurrection of Jesus was just the beginning and not the conclusion of the Gospel? That the promises of the resurrection are, in part, ours to fulfill? How would a life of discipleship,
of witness, of love, between Pentecost and Advent, be different were we to trust that Jesus meant what he said in 14:12, “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” We are in the world now, the world that God loves (3:16).

**Prayers of the People**

Oh God, as we hear Jesus pray, help us to remember that he was not alone in a garden, but sitting with his disciples after a meal. Help us to remember that Jesus was praying not only for those who knew him during his life, but he is also praying for us, now. Open our hearts each day to the possibility of knowing You better. God, we ask you to inspire and direct us in our days and in our work.

And we pray for our world, God, for our country, our city and those close to us, as we begin, with tenuous steps, to re-engage safely in our larger community after months of such careful living. Thank you, God for the many people who have kept our essential services going at such personal risk. Guide our steps. Please equip us with patience, perseverance, and help us form our words so they are helpful and encouraging.

We pray for your tender mercy and care on those who have suffered or perished, during, or because of this terrible pandemic. Help us find ways to come alongside those mourning and grieving—to reach out even from our homes, to those who might be consoled by our attention. We pray for those who have lost jobs or hope or who feel alone.

We offer to you now in silence the concerns and thanksgivings of our innermost selves ________________ (90 seconds of silence).

Thank you for this moment—for our chance to gather and pray. Thank you for our church God, and for sunny spring days. We name before you members of our church community and pray for their health and protection: Dave & Carrie Hamm, George & Amanda Hanley, David & Marion Hanold, Doug Hanslip, Todd & Betsy Harootyan, Mike Harper, Ken & Julianna Harris, Chris & Anne Hart, Gregory & Carrie Hart, John & Margaret Hart, Bill & Diane Hart, Alan & Anja Harvey, Ann Harvey, Dorothy Harza, Fred & Gail Hawk, David & Karen Hawkins, Barbara Hayes, Dana & Sharon Hayes, Eric & Bridgette Hayes,
Thank you for our Outreach Partner, The Infant Welfare Society, and for the 99 years they have served the needs of young children. We are grateful our church can help support pre-school and head Start programs, especially for children parented by teenagers. Thank you for the staff who offer prenatal groups, home visiting programs and parent training and support. We pray for all the young people in our world whose education has been interrupted by the Covid-19 virus. We pray for patience for parents and safety and health for children everywhere.

We name now the people known to us in need of your particular concern.

Oh God, thank you for all you provide for us. Give us grateful hearts as we pray to you the prayer that Jesus gave us:

*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 and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*

Prayer for the Day

_Holy Spirit of God,
We watch for you, we wait for you,
We look for you, we long for you._

_Come Holy Spirit, renew us, refresh us, restore us and Inspire us, that we may live and work to your glory; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you, O Spirit, are with the Father, one God for ever. Amen_

Blessing

All who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.
The Holy and Mighty God protect you from all evil,
Christ the King deliver you from all darkness,
The Holy Spirit guide you into the ways of peace.