



May 7, 2023

11 a.m.

Flowers given by **Phil Swain**, Happy **91st** Birthday **Chuck Jarman**

Thank you to **Connie Toops** for making the beautiful altar cloth in honor of Asian-American history month.

PRELUDE

I Will Praise, Thee, O Lord
The Piedmont University Singers

Knut Nystedt

INVITATION to WORSHIP

One: The word, “Nothing,” can provoke and evoke a *wide* range of emotions.

Many: We delight when the cost of an item is nothing.

One: Or when the mechanic says there is not a thing wrong with our car.

Many: And there are times, “Nothing” can cause us to feel deflated and defeated.

One: When the color commentary in our mind tells us we are nothing or we can feel like a slug when we don’t have something productive scheduled on our calendars.

Many: Today, we lean into the promise that there is nothing we can do or say that separates us from God’s love.

One: Nothing means nothing ~ God’s gift of grace is unconditional, and God’s love is unceasing.

Many: With this truth echoing off these walls and seeking space to live in our hearts, we worship with a full voice this morning.

*OPENING HYMN

Sing Praise to God, Who Has Shaped

#22

Sing praise to God, who has shaped and sustains all creation! Sing praise, my soul, in profound and complete adoration! Gladsome rejoice organ and trumpet and voice joining God’s great congregation.

Praise God, our guardian, who lovingly offers correction, Who, as on eagle's wings, saves us from sinful dejection. Have you observed, how we are always preserved by God's parental affection?

Sing praise to God, with sincere thanks for all your successes. Merciful God ever loves to encourage and bless us. Only conceive, what godly strength can achieve: strength that would touch and caress us.

Sing praise, my soul, the great name of your high God commending. All that have life and breath join you, their notes sweetly blending. God is your light! Soul, ever keep this in sight: amen, amen never ending.

***OPENING PRAYER**

God in a world of urgency so often the messages that guide and govern our lives are, "Act now supplies are running out" and "don't just sit there, *do something.*" We get caught in cycles of perpetual motion rather than perpetual praise. Too often our worth is wrapped up in what we produce rather than who we are ~ Your beloved. The message of Your love being unconditional and unceasing can seem *too* good to be true. Help us, O God. We are surrounded and swim in a sea of advertisers pointing out that our hair isn't shiny, teeth aren't gleaming, and don't even get us started on that clothing choice! In a world where we constantly compare ourselves on social media because there is *still* the middle school adolescent who resides in us. In a world where fear and anger are too often what is taught and caught, we *long* for *another* way. Open us to Your way today. Be patient with us when our minds and hearts and souls wonder if Your promise is true and can be trusted. And awaken us to a new song to live our lives.

RESPONSE

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

**O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
The glories ever echoing the triumphs of God's grace!**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Romans 8, *selected verses*

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, the Searcher of hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? God who did not withhold God's own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will God not with Christ also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON

The Nothing-ness of Faith

ANTHEM

Sing Me to Heaven
The Piedmont University Singers

Daniel Gawthrop

HOLY COMMUNION ~ From Sung-Hwan Park, a Korean minister.

One: What is showing thankfulness to God?

Many: That is life itself.

One: What is graceful for you?

Many: Yahweh's love, which is like the endless cycle of movement.

One: What do you seek?

Many: We long for wisdom itself.

One: Where is that wisdom?

Many: In our rice, in our community, in our friend's voice, and in Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection.

PASTORAL PRAYER and 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

Go, My Children, with My Blessing

#82

**Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone; Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own; In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever,
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.**

**Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me; Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free. Here my Spirit's power filled you, here with tender comfort stilled you;
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.**

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Unclouded Day
The Piedmont University Singers

arr. Shawn Kirchner

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, May 7, 2023

We warmly welcome the Piedmont University choir today. The Piedmont Singers is a highly select 35-voice choir that is known for vocal precision and expressive singing, includes students from all academic disciplines. Under the direction of Dr. Wallace Hinson for the last 30 years, the choir is the touring ensemble for Piedmont University and has represented the institution on tour throughout the United States, Canada, England, and Wales. Dr. Hinson is a native of Little Rock,

Arkansas. Piedmont University is affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. The Conservatory of Music offers undergraduate degrees in Performance, Musical Theatre, and Music Education. **We are blessed to have the opportunity to warmly welcome this amazing group of young adults to minister to us through music today!!**

New Member Session will be held in the Oasis Center after worship today. We invite anyone interested in learning more about the church, our covenants, mission and ministry to please attend.

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ The group will remain hybrid ~ in person in the Oasis Center OR on Zoom at 3 pm the Second and Fourth Wednesday. Upcoming Topics: **May 10:** “Asian American Pacific Heritage Month Mashup” - Talks at Google by George Takei and the Cast of Broadway’s *Allegiance* **May 24:** “Let’s get to the root of racial injustice” - TED TALKS by Dr Megan Ming Francis

COLLAGE (LGBTQ + Allies) News ~ Our COLLAGE (LGBTQ + Allies) group will meet on zoom on **Tuesday, May 9th and 23rd at 11 am.** This is a wonderful chance to connect! **SILVER PRIDE, June 10th ~** –COLLAGE will be hosting a table at the Sarasota Senior Center. This is a wonderful way to reach out to LGBTQ+ seniors and their Allies. Please sign up to help offer a warm welcome to those at this event. **COLLAGE LUNCHEON, June 11th ~ Mayomi Fowowe-Makinde,** a Gay man born and raised in Nigeria where he lived in constant fear for his life, will be our special speaker. When he was outed by a family member, he escaped from his native country to avoid imprisonment. (It is illegal to be Gay in Nigeria and family members face 10 years of imprisonment if they know a family member is Gay and do not report it.) The presentation is open to all. Please sign up in advance if you want a box lunch.

Please join the **Ready Readers on May 11th at noon** as they discuss *The Light We Carry* by Michelle Obama. Ready Readers is a book discussion group that meets on the second Thursday of every month at **noon** in the **Oasis Center**. We welcome and encourage the participation and input of new members even if you are not able to attend every meeting. For more information and further updates, contact Sandy Smith at sandysmithvi@gmail.com or 340-227-5121.

MOTHER’S DAY - COLLAGE will be hosting Sunday social hour for the month of May. And a Mother’s Day Luncheon, **Next Sunday - May 14th** – The entire church - invited to bring a photo of mothers, or “mother-like figures.”. At each table participants will be given an opportunity to share the photo and memories. Come prepared to share the wisest advice your mother ever gave you.

You are cordially invited to a Graduation Celebration for Olivia Bixby in Syster Hall after worship on May 21st. The love of this church has shaped Olivia in so many ways. From Thursday Knights programs to Christmas pageants to Sunday School teachers ~ your presence has blessed her. We invite you to celebrate as Olivia graduates from Riverview High School. She will be attending Florida State University beginning in June (summer) 2023. Come and help us bless Olivia in her future endeavors.

NEXT UCC MEN'S BREAKFAST ON MAY 20 ~ The UCC Men's breakfast series continues on Saturday, May 20 and all the men of the congregation, new and longtime members, are invited to join for breakfast in Syster Hall then. Coffee will be on at 8 am and breakfast served at 8:30 am. After breakfast, Dick Miller will present a short and informative program about the MOTE aquarium. You may register by Thursday, May 18 by calling Sherry at the church office at 941-953-7044. We hope to see you there!

Pastor Wes will be on vacation **May 22nd through May 29th**. Please contact the church office if you have a pastoral concern.

May 28th ~ Pentecost Sunday ~ wear RED to worship ~ ONE service at 11 a.m. with **Rev. Dr. David Pitt preaching.** Rev. Dr. Pitt is a member of our church and a retired UCC pastor who served in a variety of ministries from chaplaincy to local church. Rev. Dr. Pitt is a member of our Lay Visitation Ministry and will guide us as we celebrate the birthday of the church.

CALENDAR

Sunday, May 7 ~ Piedmont University Singers ~ both services!!

Sunday Worship, 9 am, in sanctuary
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in the sanctuary and online
Birthday Sunday, noon, Syster Hall
FREE ~ Piedmont Singers Concert, 2:30 pm, Sanctuary

Monday, May 8

Covenant Group Conversation, 1 pm, Zoom

Tuesday, May 9

COLLAGE (LGBTQ and Allies), 11 am, Zoom
Endowment, 1 pm, Oasis Center
Spiritual Education and Growth, 2 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom
Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 pm, Zoom

Wednesday, May 10

Security and Safety Team, 9:30 am, Oasis Center and Zoom
Wednesday Bible Study, 11 am, Hybrid, Oasis Center and Zoom
Sacred Conversation on Race, 3 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom
Choir, 7 pm, Chapel

Thursday, May 11

Budget, Finance, and Stewardship, 3 pm, Zoom

Sunday, May 14 ~ Mother's Day ~ Wear a HAT to Worship

Sunday Worship, 9 am, in sanctuary
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in the sanctuary and online
COLLAGE Mother's Day lunch, noon, Syster Hall