

## Dear Children of God: OMG

What would St. Paul text? Something clever, profound, and to the point, no doubt. Some of the writings of Paul or attributed to Paul in the New Testament are some of the most eloquent and beautiful prose in all of scripture. But these texts were about getting the point across, arguing for faith, and inviting the readers or hearers to a deeper experience of the risen Christ. So, what are those core elements, those essentials that would bring the desired outcome? What would Paul text to open the conversation and get readers to claim the faith he presents? That's what we hope becomes clear as we engage in the conversation we call "Dear Children of God."

### Now That Faith Has Come

June 22, 2025

[Second Sunday After Pentecost](#)

### Planning Notes

Today, the surprise of Pentecost and the glory of Trinity Sunday propel us toward...Ordinary Time. This is always the way of it in the liturgical year and in the Christian life, this juxtaposition of extraordinary and mundane, the shocking revelations and the ordinary question of "What do we do now?" As you invite your congregation into this extended season after Pentecost, take a moment to explain the meaning of this season. In Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Eastertide, we re-member the story of God's revelation of divine love among us in Jesus, God Incarnate. Ordinary Time calls us to listen, discern, and wrestle with how to live into the story of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection in our daily lives as individuals and as a community.

As you pull out the green paraments or cloths for this season, consider how you might incorporate visual representations of the themes of this series on or around your altar. Throughout the three parts of the "Dear Children of God" series, we will approach the epistles as different forms of written communication. For Part 1, the graphics and title imagine Paul texting the Galatians. So, you might consider incorporating emojis on the altar or show different means of communication, especially if you want to keep the altar somewhat the same throughout the summer.

Musically, consider how this series and this season present opportunities to return to some of your congregation's favorite hymns. Perhaps now is a time to lean into the comfort of familiar songs while also digging deep into the history or theology of the text, highlighting key insights for the congregation before singing or during the sermon. That said, this series might also offer an opportunity for your congregation to learn a new heart song over several weeks. You might consider "Welcome" (W&S 3152), "Bring Forth the Kingdom" (TFWS 2190), or "Let Us Plead for Faith Alone" (UMH 385). Whether you choose already established heart songs or decide to teach something new, use music, visuals, prayers, and even silences to guide the congregation into the rhythms of Ordinary Time that will carry them forward over the next few months.

## Preaching Notes

It's such a small thing. Maybe too much to hang these notes upon, I'll admit that. Sometimes we preachers get carried away with small things, things that most folks would just skip over. And maybe they are things worth skipping over. Perhaps if we just focused on the big picture, we wouldn't get ourselves tangled into such big knots. Maybe if we didn't spend so much time on tiny things, we would have less conflict in the body.

Our passage for this week is a big-picture kind of thing. "Now that faith has come" speaks of a grand change or a new reality. Something big has happened; something transforming and world-altering. Perhaps we would be better served by focusing on that. This week, we are drawing a grand design, glimpsing the kingdom in our verses. So, we should stand on the mountaintop and gaze in wonder, slip on the wide-angle lens, and capture the vista that opens before us. It will take our breath away. Our jaws will drop at the glory; our hearts will pound at the vision. It will seem too beautiful, too powerful, too hopeful. Almost unattainable.

Almost unattainable. The big picture is what captures us, but we often turn away because it seems out of reach. It seems beyond our capacity. We ache to live in that vision, yet our hearts betray us; our wills fail us; our strength deserts us. Sometimes a focus on the big picture leads us to despair. "How long, O Lord?" the psalmist wondered when the big picture stayed consistently out of reach.

Sometimes we have to look closer, down to the detail, to the small things that seem insignificant, yet might be within our reach or understanding. Those small things might move us closer.

OK, enough suspense, right? What are we talking about? We're looking at these familiar words from Paul's Letter to the Galatians, chapter 3, verses 23 through 29.

Let's start with the big picture, shall we? It's right there in verse 28. The image of the church and the world without barriers. It is about acceptance and equality. This is a picture of a community that gets along because it values everyone; everyone is respected and honored. There is no such thing as a second-class citizen. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

But wait, it gets even better. Earlier in the passage is the idea that we no longer need the law. The function of the law, says Paul, was to keep us in line. It was a diagnostic tool; it showed us our failings. The law was not about making us better; it was about disciplining us. It didn't change hearts. But now we don't need it anymore, because hearts have changed. We keep within the bounds of the law because we want to. That is how we choose to live; that is what defines us; that is who we are.

At least, that is who we can be. It's who we want to be, isn't it? At our best, we do. And that is the problem. We are so aware of our shortcomings and prejudices that we know such a vision is beyond us. We try; we really try to love our neighbors. We try to see the face of Jesus in those around us. We generate the energy; we grit our teeth and put our backs into it. We live in a culture that values individual effort. The bookstores are lined with shelf after shelf of self-help materials, all telling us that we can do it if we try hard enough. So, we try. And we can't do it.

It simply isn't within us to love as Jesus loved. As much as we would like to think we could do it, we can't. And this is where the despair kicks in. This is where the big-picture vision begins to wear on us. This is where, if we're honest, we want to give up. It's a dream, some argue, a pipe dream. It would be better to

turn back to the law, to legislate our morality. Except even there, we fail. Paul told us we would, so we shouldn't be surprised that the law doesn't work any better than will.

So, where do we go from there? We as much as admitted that there's nothing we can do. So, what's left? A preposition. Such a tiny thing, yet it might mean the difference between despair and hope. Three letters in Greek - *eis*. In English, we use four letters - *into*. It makes all the difference in the world.

Look back at verse 27. That is the verse that sets up the vision of the true community that appears in the next verse. Paul is saying without 27, verse 28 can't and won't happen. And what is in verse 27? Baptism.

Uh, right. A little water on our heads, and we are all different. Everything becomes possible with a ritual and symbolic action. Right? Then why haven't we been doing a better job of it? Why can't the church, which has been doing the baptism thing for thousands of years, get it right, live the vision, and create the community?

Because of the preposition. Read it again. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ..." *Into*. Paul implies a direction, a process. Our baptism is not simply an outward sign; it is an inward grace, to use the old description of the sacrament. Inward grace is a process of transformation. Keep reading: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ." We're getting dressed. We aren't dressed yet because we don't yet look like Christ, but we are getting dressed. Or maybe: we are "being dressed. It is like having a helper because the garments are too difficult for us. We need other hands to button the buttons and tie the ties.

And those other hands are Christ's. By being baptized into Christ, we are letting Christ take over; we are letting Christ's will supplant our wills. We are letting Christ dress us so that we might live into the vision of the kingdom (and maybe this helps us understand that parable about the wedding garment!) We have to be properly dressed in the uniform of the reign of God. Hold onto the vision as we live into Christ.

## Liturgical Resources

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. **24** Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be reckoned as righteous by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, **26** for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. **27** As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:23-29 NRSV).

### *Call to Worship*

As we have been baptized into Christ,

**We are clothed with Christ.**

And if we belong to Christ,

**Then we are Abraham's offspring**

And heirs according to the promise.

**Thanks be to God.**

### *Prayer for the Day*

Holy God, there is much that tries to separate us from one another. Creed and color, gender and nation, class and culture call for our fragmentation, but you call us to live together in your grace. You call us your children. You call us beloved. Today, let the refrain: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:29) guide us with every step. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

### *Prayer of Confession*

Loving and holy God, we confess that we hold tightly to our pride and resist your transforming grace. You offer us freedom and a welcome place in your family, yet we struggle, trying to earn what you have already given. We cling to our old ways of doing and thinking. You call us your beloved children. Help us hear and claim our new identity. Free us from the bonds of limited imagination and empower us to thrive in your life of faith and grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Children of God: Faith has come, and we are free. Receive your forgiveness today.

### *Benediction*

Children of God, there is nothing to keep you from loving God and loving your neighbor. You are beloved, and you belong to Christ. You are claimed by God's love, redeemed by Christ's life, and set free to serve in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Called to Freedom**

June 29, 2025

[Third Sunday after Pentecost](#)

### **Planning Notes**

Our passage from [Galatians](#) this week includes one of those well-known texts that many of us were required to memorize at some point in Sunday school or youth group. Yes, the fruit of the Spirit is incredibly important; it is the culminating point of this passage. Yet, be careful not to skip to the end and miss how Paul gets us there. The goal is not to check everything off Paul's list and count ourselves righteous. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit is more like a compass, helping us discern when we are and are not living into the freedom for which Christ sets us free.

To that end, worship is not just an opportunity to learn about the fruit of the Spirit but to practice it together! What are ways you can incorporate a spiritual discipline into worship this week? Perhaps you take extra time with the reading of scripture and do group [lectio divina](#). Or maybe invite the congregation to meditate and journal around a reflection question after the sermon. You might even consider selecting an image that demonstrates a key point in the scripture and do a [visio divina](#) practice during the sermon.

Consider how other liturgy pieces inform, illustrate, and inspire the congregation's engagement with this text and its depiction of freedom. For instance, George Matheson's hymn, "Make Me a Captive Lord," explores freedom as something we find only when bound to Christ, challenging modern ideas of freedom as the ability to do whatever we please (read more [here](#)). The prayer of confession opens opportunities to pray for all the ways we lack freedom because we have turned away from God's abundant life; the prayers of the people may be a time to notice and recognize the consequences in our world when people pursue autonomy as opposed to freedom in Christ. The passing of the peace is also a time when we reach out and recognize our connectedness with one another and that we are all involved in making and sharing peace as a community. So, give the passing of the peace a little extra time this Sunday. Invite people to converse a little bit more. Or pass the peace at the beginning of the service and pass the love at the end before sending everyone out into the world to love others. Whatever you choose to do, consider and discern how your congregation can exercise the fruit of the Spirit together so they can recognize and exercise the fruit of the Spirit in the world.

### **Preaching Notes**

Here, on the cusp of the celebration of Independence Day in the US, freedom is ever before us—freedom as an abstract, freedom as a concept. We believe in freedom, we claim. We fought for freedom; we sacrificed for freedom. It's a powerful statement, a patriotic declaration. But it begs the question, freedom for what? Well, of course, our answer is usually something like anything we want! Except that doesn't really work for those of us who have chosen to follow Christ. Of course, you can argue that when our wills are perfectly aligned with Christ's then whatever we want is what he would want us to do. True, I can't argue with that. But then, how aligned are we?

Maybe we need something a little more directive, a little more transformative. Let's ask again, "What are we called to freedom for?" Let me humbly suggest that we are free to make a list. That's what Paul says, anyway. We make lists. Paul loves his lists. They pop up all over the place. You're reading along, and suddenly there it is. His shopping list. What? No, well, sort of. A list of things he's looking for.

Or, in this case, a list of things he's trying to avoid. An anti-shopping list, a "take to the dump" list, a spring-cleaning list. A ... well, you get the idea. He does go on a bit with his list of negatives. It doesn't take long before we wave him away, saying, "We get it, we get it. Sin is bad. Got it, thanks." But he keeps going. It is as if he wants to find something that strikes a chord in our hearts, something that feels like our own crushed toes instead of the toes of the folks on the other side of the sanctuary. We hear idolatry and sorcery (really? Sorcery?), and we snicker behind our hands. But he keeps on going and eventually gets to jealousy and anger, and suddenly, he's moved from preaching to meddling.

Thankfully, this isn't just a list of disapproval, not just the "stay away from" list. There is also the "embrace" list, the life list. We're looking for life, remember. We're embracing the new possibilities that are ours in Christ. So, we have another list, a singular list. Did you notice that? The list of negativities is a plurality, a list of diffusion, of scattering, of this and that and the other thing, a list of dividing and turning inward, a wall-building list. The first list is a list destructive of community. But the second list is singular. Works of the flesh, but fruit (not fruits) of the Spirit. Notice? It's not really a list. It's an attribute, a gift, a focus: love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. We could stop there - Paul doesn't, but he could have. Love. That's it. That's all. All we need is love. But what kind of love? (I mean, there is love, and there is love.) Love is in every song we stream, on every soap opera we binge, every novel we read, and every ad we

consume. *Ah*, says Paul, *ah*. The fruit of the Spirit is love - but it is love that is joyful, love that is peaceful - peace bringing, peace bestowing. It is love that is patient and kind (he'll remember that phrase and repeat it later when he writes to the church in Corinth). It is a love that is generous, that pours out like the rain of grace that is poured down on us constantly. It's a love that is faithful, that honors the relationship, that lifts up the other, and doesn't always ask, "What do I get out of this?" The fruit of the Spirit is a love that is gentle, not just that it cuddles kittens and puppies, but that it bends down to help those who have fallen, that it holds the beloved in an embrace that strengthens and not drains.

And the fruit of the Spirit is love that is self-controlled. Self-controlled? Really, Paul? Self? Or does he mean the fruit of the Spirit is love that is Spirit-controlled? Spirit-controlled so seamlessly that it seems like self; so natural that the will that resides in us seems like our will, but is really God's will woven into our DNA, our way of seeing the world, our giftedness that is played out in ways that are different from everyone else's. And yet, it isn't us. It can't be us. It is us transformed. Us remade. Us surrendered. Self-control, I've tried that. I've been there. I threw out the t-shirt. I want Spirit-controlled love to take root in me and bring forth the harvest of fruit that ripples out into a hungry and needy world.

So, now we've got our lists: our "stay away from this pile of squirming divisiveness" list and our "gathering together and focusing our whole being into one whole self-aware, spirit-filled person" list. Now what? Now, work. That's what. There is soil to till, seeds to plant, pruning to do, and weeds to pull. Yeah, it's not very glamorous. It's not sinking our teeth into the ripe juicy fruit of our salvation. It's not the mountaintop excitement of breathing the air of the Spirit and knowing without a doubt that we are alive in Christ. Well, it is. That is there, too. There is joy; there is enthusiasm; there is passion. But there is work too. There is the daily choosing to let the Spirit lead, the monumental effort of surrendering our will again and again and again.

There are tools to harvest this fruit of the Spirit, and every gardener needs tools to work on the fertile ground. The tools for this labor of sanctifying grace, letting God work in us and through us are called *means of grace*. These are spiritual disciplines, practices that bring us back to the decision point again and take us where God would have us go. John Wesley identified five instituted means of grace, not as exclusive practices, but as ones that help us understand the process of being shaped in faith. His five were prayer, searching the scriptures, Communion, fasting, and gathering in groups to share faith and hold one another accountable. These disciplines are the means by which we work toward the harvest, through which we cultivate the fruit of the Spirit within us and between us. They are the life's blood of living the life that Christ came to bring us, the air that we breathe so we can inhale the Spirit that takes up residence within us. They are the signs of God's eternal spring at work in us. We are called to the freedom that brings forth a harvest of the fruit of the Spirit. Thanks be to God.

## **Liturgical Resources**

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another. **14** For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **15** If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, **21** envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. **24** And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another (Galatians 5:1, 13-25 NRSV).

### *Call to Worship*

Our freedom comes as life in the Spirit.

**We reject the works based only on our fleshly desires.**

We live a new life of spirit and truth.

**Let us worship the Lord in full spirit. Amen.**

### *Prayer for the Day*

God of all life and love: we are your children, and you made us free to live in joyful relationship with you and one another. Your grace empowers us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Give us the courage to love ourselves as much as you love us and to love others with the same compassion. Amen.

### *Prayer of Confession*

Loving God, you give us freedom. In fact, in you, we live in perfect freedom. Fear tries to bind us. Idolatry comes chasing after us. Divisive arguments try to trap us in corners and keep us locked away from one another. These are not the freedoms you have in mind for your children, loving God. We confess, we have submitted to them in the past, but no more. Inspire us to live in the freedom you have given us for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You set us free. Give us the courage to enjoy it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Beloved children of God: hear and believe the good news, for freedom Christ has set us free to live anew.

### *Benediction*

Children of God: you are loved into freedom, set loose on the world to share the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so go and love your neighbor, all of your neighbors, as you love yourself, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## A New Creation Is Everything!

July 6, 2025

[Third Sunday after Pentecost](#)

### Planning Notes

“One last thing!” That’s what I imagine Paul saying as he was finishing his letter to the Galatians. “I can’t forget this one last thing! Oh, and I need to make it big: SO THEN, WHENEVER WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY, LET US WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF THE FAMILY OF FAITH.” Yes, I like to think the apostle Paul “shouted” these words to the Galatians—and to us. Because this is the point of all of it. All that Paul has been trying to say in this letter and beyond—work for the good of all and take care of one another so we can keep doing God’s good work together.

If you’ve been using emojis as visual elements throughout this series, think about what you might use to depict this idea of doing good and caring for one another. Are there other symbols in your community that communicate this message? Are there organizations your church partners with? Upcoming mission projects? Perhaps this is a Sunday to highlight the work of Stephen Ministers, the pastoral care team, or volunteers who help visit and take Communion to homebound members. Consider asking a couple of members to talk about how the congregation has come together to support one another in the last year. Part of building a new creation of mutual care is incorporating the stories and voices of the community into worship.

Since many congregations celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month, consider how you might incorporate the themes of communal care and God’s new creation into the Communion liturgy. You might sing “For Everyone Born” (*Worship and Song* 3149) or “I Come with Joy” (*United Methodist Hymnal* 617), emphasizing how we come to the table as individuals so that we may be made into a community, the Body of Christ. If you typically pass the peace earlier in the service, consider waiting to include it after the confession and before the Great Thanksgiving to highlight that we are reconciled to God so that we can also be reconciled to one another. Find ways to emphasize how your congregation already acts as a community of care and how God is calling all of us into deeper and wider expressions of love and care for one another and our world.

### Preaching Notes

My favorite song from the popular musical “Wicked” (which wasn’t sung in the movie released last fall) is sung almost at the end. It is the final meeting of the two main characters who have been friends and enemies, partners and rivals throughout the show. When they meet, under less-than-ideal circumstances right before the end, they sing this song, knowing that they will probably never see each other again. It is an apology and an affirmation and an acknowledgment of a deep and lasting connection, of the impact that a person can make on another life. It is titled “For Good,” and composer Stephen Schwartz considers it one of the best songs he’s ever written.

*“I’ve heard it said / that people come into our lives for a reason / bringing something we must learn / and we are led / to those who help us most to grow / if we let them / and we help them in return // Well, I don’t know if I believe that’s true / but I know I’m who I am today / because I knew you...”*

*Songwriter: Stephen Lawrence Schwartz  
For Good lyrics © Universal Music Corp., Greydog Music,*

The song recognizes the influence that others bring to our lives and the impact that they make, often in surprising, but permanent ways. The turn of the phrase of the title is that the beneficial (for good) influence from those close to us has a permanent (for good) effect. It stays with us. We are different because of the good that others bring to our lives. "You'll be with me / like a handprint on my heart," Elphaba sings.

This week, we conclude part one of our series "Dear Children of God" series by asking what it means to be a new creation. I have long maintained that to fully grasp Paul's writing, you have to think in plurals. We tend to think in singulars: What can I do? How can I grow in discipleship? The new creation Paul describes is a relationship, a community. We are a new creation. My faith is wrapped up in your faith, my growth in your growth. Paul asks us in the sixth chapter of Galatians to measure our faith by our impact on the wider community and the folks around us. In the middle of our text for this week, we read this:

*So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.*

*Galatians 6:9-10 NRSV*

What do you hear in these two verses? I couldn't help but hear this one, simple phrase: "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right." Pretty simple, really. "Just hang in there," says Paul, "Just keep plugging away." Service in the name of Christ is a marathon and not a sprint, as so many have written or said. So, keep at it.

Yet that hardly seems satisfactory. The idea that there is a reserve in me, that through sheer force of will, I can keep my nose to the grindstone, can keep putting one foot in front of another, driving myself into more and better service to God and my neighbor, is daunting at best, nonsense at worst. It just isn't within me to keep going when I want to stop. It isn't within me to keep serving when the energy runs out or the selflessness begins to wane. So, to what could Paul be referring when he says, "Let us not grow weary"?

The problems in the church at Galatia were many and complicated. There was division at the core of the church. There was some serious theological debate, but mostly the division had to do with practice—how they lived out this new faith. It got to the point of name-calling, separation, anger, and frustration. All this grieved Paul, as you might imagine. But he wasn't ready to give up.

Chapter six begins with a conversation about how to deal with conflict. Using phrases like "spirit of gentleness" and "bear one another's burdens," Paul sets out a radically different tone for the church when it comes to division. Instead of using the "whoever shouts the loudest" model of group dynamic, Paul wants the church to understand that there are different priorities and methodologies.

He includes a warning of sorts, implying that there are responsibilities to those "who have been taught the Word." There are expectations and a calling to live up to. There is a standard to keep.

It is during that conversation that verses 9 and 10 appear. The word “especially” caught me. At first, it was an embarrassment. Surely, Paul, we aren’t to be an inward-looking organization, concerned first with taking care of ourselves. Surely, we aren’t to have a me-first mentality. What else could “especially for those of the family of faith” mean?

It could mean we can sustain working for good only when we do it in partnership with the wider community. It means that since I am incapable of sustaining the desire to do good, build up, work for the kingdom and kin-dom of God all on my own, I need to work in concert with brothers and sisters in the faith. I need reminders that I am not alone. I need the family of faith.

That, I believe, is what “especially” means in verse ten. It is not that Christians are more worthy of good works or acts of kindness than non-Christians. But we are always looking for ways to cultivate the kind of relationships that will keep us connected and build up the body.

We are looking for and creating relationships whereby we are transformed by those who have come into our lives. We are made better; we are encouraged and equipped to be better, to serve with passion, care, and love. We have been remade for good, and we will continue to serve as long as we stay connected. We will not grow weary as long as we are sustained by the body of Christ.

Paul’s argument, then, would be that people do come into our lives for a reason, and we are in other people’s lives for a reason. That reason is to be shaped for service in the name of Christ. And to be so shaped for good.

### **Liturgical Resources**

My brothers and sisters, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. **2** Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. **4** All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor’s work, will become a cause for pride. **5** For all must carry their own loads.

**6** Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

**7** Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. **8** If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh, but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. **9** So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. **10** So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! **12** It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. **13** Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. **14** May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which <sup>[b]</sup> the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. **15** For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation is everything! **16** As for those

who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God (Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16 NRSV).

### *Call to Worship*

What do we have to boast about?

**The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

And what does this cross mean for us?

**Everything is a new creation.**

### *Prayer of the Day*

God of endings and beginnings, we thank you for always starting anew with us. When we find ourselves at our wits' end, at the end of our rope, at the end of our patience, or even at the end of our hope, you are there. You find us and bring us into your new beginning, again and again. Amen.

### *Confession and Assurance of Pardon*

Holy God, Fountain of all blessing and grace: we confess there are times when we look at our work, at our accomplishments, with prideful ambition as if we were the source of our abilities and gifts. At other times, we look at our efforts with disgust and regret, as if your gifts in us are not enough. Forgive our pride and our despair, Holy God. Renew in us a humble trust in your guiding hand and a hope that your grace is sufficient for every step. Give us the courage to begin again, to jump into a new start with you and one another. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen

Beloved children: Hear and believe the good news, God's mercy and peace are upon you now and always.

### *Benediction*

Beloved children, you are blessed and sent out into the world to share God's good love with everyone you meet. Let us not grow weary of doing what is right. Go and work for the good of all. Go in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit to do all the good you can for all the people you can in all the ways you can for as long as you can. Amen.