

## **Order of Worship**

The APCE Annual Event, St. Louis, Missouri  
Saturday, January 27, 2024

### **Gathering Music**

#### **Call to Worship**

It may seem naïve,  
in a world of grief,  
to choose to live in joy.

**It may seem foolish,  
in a world where cynicism and indifference are powerful,  
to sing and dance to a different tune.**

It may seem cruel,  
in a world of suffering and injustice,  
to speak of abundance and celebration.

**But Jesus comes  
bringing joy into our despair,  
singing into our somberness,  
and liberation into our iniquity.**

### **Music**

#### **Call to Confession**

“A Brief for the Defense “ by Jack Gilbert

Sorrow everywhere. Slaughter everywhere. If babies  
are not starving someplace, they are starving  
somewhere else. With flies in their nostrils.  
But we enjoy our lives because that’s what God wants.  
Otherwise the mornings before summer dawn would not  
be made so fine. The Bengal tiger would not  
be fashioned so miraculously well. The poor women  
at the fountain are laughing together between  
the suffering they have known and the awfulness  
in their future, smiling and laughing while somebody  
in the village is very sick. There is laughter

every day in the terrible streets of Calcutta,  
and the women laugh in the cages of Bombay.  
If we deny our [joy], resist our satisfaction,  
we lessen the importance of their deprivation.  
We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,  
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have  
the stubbornness to accept [joy] in the ruthless  
furnace of this world. To make injustice the only  
measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Gracious God,**

**When we too quickly assume that joy is a feeling,  
rather than a choice,  
forgive us.**

**When we too often conclude that joy is a result of circumstance,  
rather than a condition of the spirit,  
forgive us.**

**When we too arrogantly believe that joy is of our own making,  
rather than a gift you shower down upon us,  
forgive us.**

**And, Merciful God,**

**When we lament the sorrow that lasts through the night  
without remembering that joy comes every morning,  
forgive us that, too, we pray.**

(Silent prayer)

### **Assurance of God's Grace**

#### **Sharing the Peace of Christ**

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you!

**And also with you!**

### **Musical Response**

**Prayer for Illumination (unison)**

**Holy Spirit,  
Come like fresh morning dew,  
like rain after a drought,  
like a river running through our lives.  
We are thirsty – thirsty for you.  
May your Word drench us in new understanding  
and wash us in your grace.  
Amen.**

**Scripture Reading**                      Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”  
This is the Word of God, for the people of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

**Rev. Jerry Cannon**

**Music**

**Prayers of the People and The 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.**

**Offering**     You can use this QR code or the one on your table to give



**Music**

**Benediction**