## The Gathering of a People of God

National Avenue is a brave place for all people. We celebrate our diversity of race, creed, religion, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. We extend a warm welcome to all this morning, especially those who are worshipping at National Avenue for the first time.

Your presence enriches us in this time of celebration together~

#### Prelude

#### Words of Gathering Dr. Etta Madden & Neil Guion

Made for freedom.

We are not made for resignation.

Passive acceptance is not the code written into our spirit.

If that were true, as a species,

we would have vanished long ago.

Instead, for millennia,

we have shaken off the temptation to simply accept reality

and the demand that we bend the knee,

and we have stood up to struggle against the odds,

to change the situation,

and to find an answer and a healing.

Those deep drives are the energy we call hope.

Those active forces are what determine our future.

# We are not made for resignation,

but for freedom.

We gather in that spirit of freedom.

[stevencharleston]

We gather to hear the stories of

Jesus' life and way.

Please stand as you are able in body or in spirit at the \* asterisks.

# \*Gathering Hymn Of Women, and of Women's Hopes We Sing 686

# \*Lighting the Christ Candle

**Neil Guion** 

The ground of love.

My sorrows are like seeds,

pressed deep into the dark earth of my soul.

I do not deny them.

I do not forget them.

But nor do I let them remain unchanged.

Over time, I let their pain turn into wisdom,

their grief into mercy, their anger into forgiveness.

Hidden within me,

I let the hurt they once carried become the compassion I now carry, compassion for all who have known what I have known,

felt what I have felt, wept as I have wept.

# The ground of love transforms the seeds of sorrow to new life, new hope, new beginnings,

# through the mystery of soul-deep healing.

I do not leave my faith fallow,

but use my brokenness like a garden

until it turns loss to gain and tears to songs of joy. [stevencharleston]

The Christ Candle is lit.

We gather around this light.

# \*Passing of the Peace

The holy hand.

Do not doubt yourself,

especially if you were programmed to do so by the critique of others, who told you over time you were not smart enough,

not good enough,

not pretty enough,

not strong enough to measure up to their expectations.

In childhood, in relationships, in sports, in schools,

in marriages, and in old age—

there are many fields in life in which the seeds of doubt can be sown.

Do not harvest weeds,

but claim the wisdom,

the beauty, and the skill that are yours—

the unique qualities that make you who you are.

Do not doubt yourself,

for the holy hand that shaped your soul is a maker of art.

You are a masterpiece of mind and spirit,

of endless possibility,

of visions unseen by any eye but your own.

[stevencharleston]

Dr. Etta Madden

May the heart of peace be with you.

# And also with you.

You are invited to share this ancient greeting with those seated near you. We are mindful each of us are at different levels of comfort, please honor those around you as you share peace. You are invited to turn to the camera and say hello to all worshipping with us online!

#### Life of the Church Rev. Jenn Simmons

You are invited to sign in via check-in. The QR code/link is in the pews. If you would like to receive our weekly update by email or would like to schedule a time for coffee with our pastor, please provide that information on the form.

#### **Reflecting on the Sacred Story**

From the Gospel According to John Chapters 6 & 8

We tell stories to learn, to grow, to spark more questions.

Today we offer the longings of our heart.

We join with the voices rising, from the past and from today. We join the story.

#### **Prayers of the Community**

Rev. Jody Furnas-Wright

Don't look.

Don't look down,

don't look back,

don't look away.

Don't look down with your head bent by sorrow or fear,

for the courage you have within you

is reason enough to hold your head high.

# Yes, you carry a heavy burden,

# but you know you never carry it alone.

Look up, for love still has much to show you.

Don't look back to the old hurts and struggles,

for they have had their moment

and cannot live in the light of this new day.

Look ahead to what life offers you now.

Don't look away from the challenges before you,

no matter how hard they may seem.

# Breathe in the strength of the Spirit and trust what guides you.

Look your truth straight in the eye

and capture the vision that will set you free.

#### Invitation to Silence

As we seek practices to help us listen,

to slow down,

to discover and trust our stories,

we center ourselves in the Jesus' invitation,

Loving God, within and around us, we revere you.

We seek to live life as you would want us to do:

with love and respect for all people

and all things in the universe.

May we find each day sufficient for our needs.

And find forgiveness when we do wrong,

just as we forgive those who do wrong to us.

In times of trouble, may we center our lives in you.

For your being is love, which comes

with strength and with beauty.

Amen.

Throughout eternity.

Reflecting in Song We Are Not Our Own

Reflection Sharing Sugar

# Musical Reflection *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me* CHRISTOPHER CHANCEL CHOIR W/ALLISON STEINER, VIOLIN

[Margaret Rolfe]

**Rev. Simmons** 

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#### **Offering of Ourselves**

You are invited to bring forth the signs and longings of your heart! Hold them high as you come forward and lay them down. We invite you to share your offerings of time, passion, energy, and resources. Thank you for investing in Spirituality, Justice, and Community as it comes to life at NACC.

Write your name.

We write our names on the sky each time we do an act of kindness.

We say "I am here" to the universe,

imprinting our time among the glittering lights of creation,

in the small spaces between lives.

There exist the joyous markers of our passing,

our moments of love and loss,

our quiet hours of thought and deep reflection.

"I am here," we announce to the heavens.

Whatever happens,

we have left our names on the hearts of those

with whom we have shared the sun.

Our memories echo down the valley of time,

still heard long

after we have made the journey home.

[stevencharleston]

Here I am.

We share our acts of kindness with one another.

**Musical Gift** 

#### Peace CHANCEL CHOIR

**NICHOLS** 

# \* Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God, the source of all our gifts!

Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

## **Prayer of Gratitude**

**Connie Condict** 

# **Sharing the Lord's Supper**

# with Revs. Jody Furnas-Wright & Jenn Simmons, Elders & Deacons

I want a story big enough to hold all our stories.

Big enough to hold the deepest despair and unspeakable joy.

Big enough to drown out all the fear mongering.

Big enough to birth hope irrepressible.

Big enough to move us toward our neighbor's need.

Big enough to change the world.

I want a table big enough to feed the world.

Big enough to fill the emptiness

not just in our bellies but also the hunger of our hearts.

Big enough to hold us in community,

Big enough to end our endless greed for more power and prestige.

Big enough to overflow with gratitude and generosity.

Big enough to change the world.

I want a love big enough to save us from ourselves.

Big enough to end our self-destructive misuse of the planet.

Big enough to reveal the way to liberation.

Big enough to free us from the need to judge others.

Big enough to teach us acceptance of one another.

Big enough to change the world.

We gather in this story.

At this table.

With this love.

On the night of his arrest,

Jesus shared a meal with his companions.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said:

"This is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying:

"This cup that is poured out is the new covenant."

Here we remember his story, his table, his love.

And we give thanks that big or not, we are enough to change the world.

# Prayer at the Table

Dr. Robyn Hagerman

## Sharing of the Bread and Cup

This morning we will receive communion by intinction. You are invited to come forward and to take a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, eat, and leave your toothpick in the bowl. The bread is gluten, nut, and dairy free so all may share at the table. If you would prefer a pre-packaged communion, remain seated and we will bring one to you. All are welcome to share at the table set by Jesus.

#### **Celebrating Aydia Lancaster**

**Sending Song** 

Be Thou My Vision

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#### **Words for Our Journey**

As we go, we are mindful of all the ways we get to show up for and with another.

I am here.

I am free.

I am a bringing of kindness.

I am bread.

I am light.

I am sugar.

I am a storyteller.

I am a listener.

As we go forth,

may we be surrounded by the Spirit,

may we feel her love and energy.

May we share this love.

May it be so.

**Postlude** 

#### **National Avenue Christian Church**

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Rev. Jenn Simmons, Lead Pastor | Ashley Quinn, Pastor for Public Theology
Rev. Jody Furnas-Wright, Adjunct Pastor for Faith Formation with Families
Rev. Dr. John White, Theologian in Residence

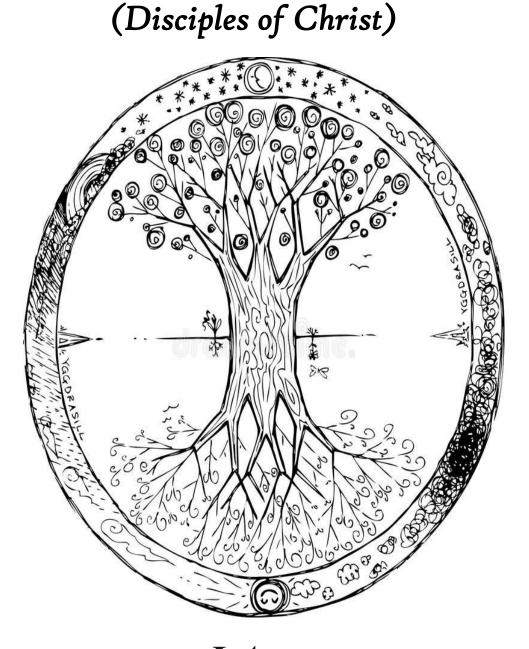
Jonathan Raney, Music Director | Jennifer Forni, Music Assistant Alex Bates, Sound Technician | Sarah Cybulski, Finance Coordinator

Hayley Norton, Communication Coordinator | Nicholas & Olivia Villaroel, Sextons Greta Allen & Aydia Lancaster, Nursery Caregivers

Kylie Robertson & Claudia Brown-Jackson, UNO Team
John Scroggins, Board Moderator

Connie Condict, Neil Guion, Robyn Hagerman, Etta Madden, Elders Greg & Barb Harrell, Emogene Casey, Desmond Simmons, Deacons

# National Avenue Christian Church



I Am.
Eastertide
11 May 2025