

Great Thanksgiving for Fifth Sunday of Easter
(The way, the truth, the life)

Invitation:

Come experience the way of grace.
Come and embrace the truth about God's love for all.
Come and taste eternal life, here at the table of Christ.

Confession:

We confess that we struggle with Christ's way of grace, there are people we choose to exclude, shut out, and don't understand how to love them. This truth, that we have fallen into Your loving hands, makes us feel uneasy. We find it hard to see that our works of righteousness are but filthy rags in Your sight. We are shocked by the idea that eternal life, the fullness of joy is a gift offered to every soul without price. We want to believe. Jesus, please be patient with our unbelief. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

One: The way, truth and life of grace is so plain: in the name of Jesus Christ we all are set free from the bondage of sin and death. Receive this free gift of salvation.

All: This gift is also for you, for Christ has set you free from the bondage of sin and death. Receive this free gift of salvation. Thank you, Jesus for this inestimable gift. Amen.

Thanksgiving:

One: What is the way you wish to live?

All: Love is the only way we wish to follow.

One: What is the truth you seek to believe?

All: Love is the only truth we can believe wholeheartedly.

One: What fills your soul with the great joy that is for all nations?

All: Living in Love's presence fills our lives with eternal joys and exaltations.

One: Almighty Love, You make Yourself so accessible.

We are never out of Your sight, nor away from Your grace.

We are never out of Your hearing, every word we speak is a prayer to You.

You are always at work in our lives, as You keep perfecting us in love.

Everyday You help us see the world around us with fresh eyes.

Everyday You seek out our generous hospitality,

even though we do not always recognize You.

You are always bringing people together, reconciling even enemies.

You have a truth that is a jewel with many facets, each one bringing us fresh understanding.

You cultivate life in such a way that it is creating a culture where:

tears are wiped away;

everyone has what they need;

everyone has a place, a gift to share, a part to play in Your restoration of the world.

This is why we are never alone when we sing Your praises.
We are never the only ones who feel a desire to acknowledge Your wisdom.
Together we join with those in heaven, and on earth to worship before you
as we exclaim:

**All: The way of Love is perfect, reviving the soul.
The way of Love is sure, making wise the simple.
The way of Love is right, rejoicing the heart.
The way of Love is clear, enlightening the eyes.
The way of Love is pure, enduring forever.
The way of Love is true and righteous all together.
The way of Love is more desired than gold;
and sweeter than the honey from a honeycomb.** (Based on Psalm 19:7-10)

One: Your ways of love are perfect,
and they have been lived before us in Jesus,
the way, the truth and in a life of love.
You are love, and all that Jesus said and did, led everyone to You.
Your life of love is the fulfillment of all of the desires found in the law and the prophets.
Acts and words of love are our only true witness.
You are why Jesus taught us to love especially our enemies,
and to never forget to pray for all of those who speak evil against us.
As expressions of Your love, Jesus cast out demons, healed the sick,
fed the hungry, no matter who they were.
Jesus never returned evil with evil.
Even on the cross, Jesus blessed those who crucified him with forgiveness.

As an expression of Your way of love,
Jesus humbled himself and washed the feet of those
who would desert him in his time of greatest need,
along with the ones who would betray and deny him.
Jesus loved, because You are love,
and thought we should become the same.

As an expression of Your way of love
Jesus took the Passover bread
and with thanksgiving gave it a more personal meaning:
“Take, eat, this is my body, broken and given for you.”
Jesus loved, because You are love,
and thought we should become the same.

As an expression of Your way of love
Jesus took the Passover wine
and with thanksgiving gave it a more personal meaning:

“Drink with me this cup of my blood,
poured out as a libation in honor of God’s eternal Covenant
established with us and the world, forgiving all of our sins.”
Jesus loved, because You are love,
and thought that we should become the same.

We do want to become one with God in love,
just as Jesus was one in love with God.
Because we believe that Jesus is the way,
the truth and the life of love,
we choose to declare this mystery of faith:

**All: As an act of divine love, Jesus died.
As an act of divine love, Jesus arose.
As an act of divine love, Jesus comes again.**

One: Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Life
use these gifts of bread and wine
to show us a way to experience the body and blood of Jesus Christ
so that we might feel deep within our souls that we are loved by God.

Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Life
use this gift of our lives as fallible as they are,
to show the world a way to experience Your church,
the sacrificed body and the compassionate bride of Christ
so that all might feel deep within their souls that they are loved by God.

Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Life
lead the Choptank Charge of the United Methodist Church
in the way of love.
Use them to heal division and to strengthen community.
Use them to show the way of reconciliation and renewal.
Perfect them in the Way, the truth, and the life of love.

**All: We pray this in harmony with the triune love of God,
expressed through the loving relationship between
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
and to their glory, through us, forever. Amen.**

One: Now let us pray in the pattern Jesus taught us:

**All: Our way to a loving life, the true expression of divine love,
fill this universe with Your unmatched grace.
Meet our daily needs and use us to meet those same needs in others.
Forgive every word and act that has not expressing Your love,
as we forgive every word and act that has not expressed Your love for us.
Deliver us from selfish self-centeredness,**

**and deliver us from the idea that life is about us.
Your love is the only way, the only truth, the only life we need. Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

Thank you for sharing with us this holy mystery of divine grace. We have been enveloped by Your love and we have felt welcomed by You. You have honored us. You have adopted us into Your family and invited us to join with You in this holy meal. This has been life changing. This has been life giving. Now send us out to live before others this way, this truth and this life that all might experience Your love in Jesus Christ. Amen.