

BENEDICTION

Pastor: Friends,
go knowing you were never meant to carry
every burden alone.
Lay down what is not yours to bear.
Release the weight of judgment
and the stones of condemnation.

Go trusting that mercy walks beside you,
grace steadies your steps,
and Christ carries what would crush your spirit.

Go lighter than you arrived.
Go freer than you imagined.
And go ready to love.

In the name of Christ,
who lifts every unnecessary burden
and leads us into life.

All people: Amen.

POSTLUDE

Mr. Kevin Crone

March 8, 2026

A Camel Reveals a Warning Savior

PREWORSHIP MUSIC

ANNOUNCEMENTS & WELCOME

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

All people: God of mercy, you never asked us to prove our worth. You never asked us to measure one another. You never asked us to carry judgment. Yet we arrive tired from trying. Slow our hurried hearts. Quiet our anxious striving. Teach us again the freedom of love. Through Christ, who lifts what crushes and restores what fear has hardened. Amen.

PRELUDE

Mr. Kevin Crone

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: Come, all who are weary from trying to get everything right.

Congregation: We come seeking rest for our souls.

Pastor: Come, all who have carried expectations heavier than love.

Congregation: We come ready to set down what weighs us down.

Pastor: Come, not because you are perfect...

Congregation: ...but because Christ meets us with mercy.

All people: Let us worship the God who lifts burdens and restores love.

HYMN

Come and Find the Quiet Center Blue Hymnal #575

CALL TO CONFESSION

Pastor: Friends, God does not wait for us to be perfect before offering mercy. With trust in God's grace, let us come before God honestly and openly in confession.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

All people: Merciful God, we confess that we have sometimes made faith heavier than you intended. We have measured others instead of loving them. We have guarded appearances instead of tending compassion. We have added rules where grace would have been enough. Forgive us when fear replaces mercy. Forgive us when we forget that love is the center of your law. Help us set down what was never ours to carry. Restore us to the freedom of loving you and loving our neighbor, as we love ourselves. (Silence observed for time of personal confession) Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Hear the good news: Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” In Christ, mercy meets us before perfection ever could. In Christ, forgiveness is already moving toward you. You are forgiven. You are loved. You are free to begin again.

All people: Thanks be to God. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI

Blue Hymnal #35

JESUS SAID, “LET THE CHILDREN COME”

ANTHEM *Lord, I Want to be a Christian* (Johnston) Chancel Choir

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

HYMN

Softly and Tenderly Blue Hymnal, #340

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 23:1-24

DIALOGUE SERMON

Rev. Laura Baker & Mr. Andrew Boyer

PRAYER

Liturgist:

God of compassion, you know the burdens we carry. The expectations we place on ourselves. The judgments we place on others. The fear that tells us we must earn what you already give. Teach us to kneel in trust. Remove what does not belong on our shoulders. Restore kindness where criticism has taken root. Restore mercy where fear has hardened us. Teach us again the joy of loving simply. We pray for those who feel excluded, those who feel watched, those who have been wounded by religion without compassion. Let your church become again a place of healing. We pray as Jesus taught us...

THE LORD’S PRAYER

All people: 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. 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 INVITATION

Liturgist:

Freely we have received mercy. Freely we offer ourselves in love. Let us give as people who no longer carry fear but carry compassion into the world. You are invited to stand, as you are able, for the dedication of our gifts through song and prayer.

DOXOLOGY

We Give Thee (Verse 1) Blue Hymnal #382

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

All people: God of abundance, receive these gifts. May they never become burdens, but instruments of mercy. Send them where love is needed most. Amen.

HYMN

In Christ There is No East or West Blue Hymnal #687