



Texts That Shape Us

Knowing Who We Are

Sunday, September 20, 2026
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
www.lajollaunitedmethodist.org

WE GATHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Gathering Music

Nimrod (from Enigma Variations)

Edward Elgar
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Call to Worship

One: All the people gather as one in the square.

All: We gather to hear, understand, and respond.

One: Ezra reads the scripture aloud, and the people listen attentively.

All: We gather to hear, understand, and respond.

One: The Levites help the people understand what has been read.

All: We gather to hear, understand, and respond.

One: This day is holy. Go, eat good food, share with those who have nothing prepared, and rejoice in God.

**All: We gather to hear, understand, and respond, for the joy of the LORD is our strength.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Introit

Grace Alone (v1)

TFWS 2162

1. Every promise we can make, every prayer and step of faith,
every difference we will make is only by his grace.
Every mountain we will climb, every ray of hope we shine,
every blessing left behind is only by his grace.

Refrain

Grace alone which God supplies, strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us our Cornerstone; we will go forth in grace alone.

Welcome

† Opening Hymn

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

UMH 89

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!
2. All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,

chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in thee.

3. Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine;
teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.
4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began;
love divine is reigning o'er us, binding all within its span.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward, in the triumph song of life.

Blessing for Young Hearts

Inform everyone of teaching this Sunday, go over memory verse, dismiss children.

Prayers of the People

*A Pastor will begin a time of prayer and name those for whom our congregation is praying.
Online Worshipers may type prayer requests in the Live Chat, taking care for privacy.*

Pastoral Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass 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.

Congregational Response

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

TFWS 2193

WE HEAR OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Scripture

Nehemiah 8:1-10 (CEB)

When the seventh month came and the people of Israel were settled in their towns, all the people gathered together in the area in front of the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Instruction scroll from Moses, according to which the Lord had instructed Israel.

So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Instruction before the assembly. This assembly was made up of both men and women and anyone who could understand what they heard. Facing the area in front of the Water Gate, he read it aloud, from early morning until the middle

of the day. He read it in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand, and everyone listened attentively to the Instruction scroll.

Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that had been made for this purpose. And standing beside him were Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his righthand side; while Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam stood on his lefthand side.

Standing above all of the people, Ezra the scribe opened the scroll in the sight of all of the people. And as he opened it, all of the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all of the people answered, “Amen! Amen!” while raising their hands. Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—helped the people to understand the Instruction while the people remained in their places. They read aloud from the scroll, the Instruction from God, explaining and interpreting it so the people could understand what they heard.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all of the people, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Don’t mourn or weep.” They said this because all the people wept when they heard the words of the Instruction.

“Go, eat rich food, and drink something sweet,” he said to them, “and send portions of this to any who have nothing ready! This day is holy to our Lord. Don’t be sad, because the joy from the Lord is your strength!”

Psalm 119:97-104 (NSRVue)

Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your decrees are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
I do not turn away from your ordinances,
for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;

therefore I hate every false way.

Scriptural Response

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God! Amen

Anthem

Speak to Me, Lord

John Ness Beck
©1978 Beckenhorst Press

Message

Texts That Shape Us

Rev. Bob Rhodes

WE RESPOND TO THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Response to the Word

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

† Doxology

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

UMH 94

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 Confession

All: God of wisdom, we want to know you and follow where you call. Other voices compete for our attention, and we listen most closely to those that confirm what we already believe. We hear scripture and resist your call. Holy One, open our hearts and minds. By your Spirit, teach, correct, and inspire us in the ways of salvation, so that what we hear becomes what we practice together. Amen.

One: Hear the good news: God speaks to us in scripture, community, prayer, and acts of mercy. By the Spirit, God teaches us, restores us, and calls us again. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

All: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.

WE FOLLOW CHRIST INTO THE WORLD

† Closing Hymn

We're Marching to Zion

UMH 733

1. Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known;
join in a song with sweet accord, join in a song with sweet accord
and thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne.

Refrain

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
we're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

2. Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God;
but children of the heavenly King, but children of the heavenly King
may speak their joys speak their joys abroad, may speak their joys abroad

Refrain

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
we're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

3. The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets
before we reach the heavenly fields, before we reach the heavenly fields,
or walk the golden streets, or walk the golden streets.

Refrain

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
we're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

4. Then let our songs abound, and every tear be dry;
we're marching through Emmanuel's ground, we're marching through Emmanuel's ground,
to fairer worlds on high, to fairer worlds on high.

Refrain

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
we're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

† Benediction

Postlude

Jupiter (from The Planets)

Gustav Holst

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Liturgical elements from *Discipleship Ministries (UMC)* and *The Abingdon Worship Annual*.

Flowers: in celebration of Lisa Smith and Alan Gilliland's first year of marriage; they were wed in the La Jolla UMC Chapel on September 20th, 2025 *and* in memory of Liz Johnson from the Langford Family

Liturgist: Deborah Butera

Organist: Robert Wuertz

Pianist: Rebecca Cosford

Ushers: Beau Brandon, Don Lincoln, Peter McCreight, Lon Showley, Russell Toppi

Tech Team: AJ Prat, Cam Rhodes

LJUMC Ministry Team

Pastor Bob Rhodes, Lead Pastor; Pastor Rob Shearer, Director of Children & Youth Ministries
Bob Wuertz, Music Ministries Director; Theresa Erb, Office Manager;
Emilio Valente, Information Technology Director; Erin Wyer, NS Executive Director