



The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 1st February 2026: 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Theme for today is “Justice, kindness, humility”

Prepared by Revd. Neil Vels

Opening Words

Beloved, what worship does God desire of us?

To do justice, love kindness, and live humbly with God.

In our life together as the body of Christ, what worship does God desire of us?

To do justice, love kindness, and live humbly with God.

When we share the good news with all creation, what worship does God desire of us?

To do justice, love kindness, and live humbly with God.

Come, let us worship God with justice, kindness, and humility!

We come to worship God with our voices and our lives. Thanks be to God!

Amen.

(Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, July 2025, from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/glory-revealed/fourth-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-liturgical-resources>)

Opening Prayer

Perfect Light of revelation, as you shone in the life of Jesus,
whose epiphany we celebrate, so shine in us and through us,
that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

(<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayer/?y=17134&season=epiphany&d=epiphany4>)

Song 58 Lord I come before your Throne of Grace

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbxDE1nab-E&list=RDttxDE1nab-E&start_radio=1

Lord, I come before Your throne of grace
I find rest in Your presence
And fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder
I behold Your face,
Singing what a faithful God have I.

*What a faithful God have I,
What a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
Faithful in every way.*

Lord of mercy, You have heard my cry;
Through the storm You're the beacon,

My song in the night.
In the shelter of Your wings,
Hear my heart's reply,
Singing what a faithful God have I.

What a faithful God have I...

Lord all sovereign, granting peace from heaven,
Let me comfort those who suffer
With the comfort You have given.
I will tell of Your great love for as long as I live,
Singing what a faithful God have I.

What a faithful God have I...

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

We come to you today Lord, because you first come to us.
You come to us as one who is faithful
One who grants peace and offers comfort
And invites us to abide in your love.
You remind us that as you love and forgive us,
That we are to do the same for others.
You tell us to worship you with justice, kindness and humility,
Rather than song, prayers and fasting.

*Micah reminds us that our prayers, fasting, and pious ritual must be lived out in compassion and justice:



When we forget the fast you desire—
To do justice, and rise up for the powerless:

Lord, have mercy.

When we forget the prayer you love—
To show compassion and care for those in need:
Christ, have mercy.
When we forget the rituals you require—
To create relationships of righteousness and peace:
Lord have mercy.

Assurance of Grace and Peace

Friends, the love of God revealed in Jesus forgives us, heals us, and sets us free to rebuild, restore, and raise up foundations for new generations. Amen.

(from * adapted from Rev. Susan A. Blain, posted on the Worship Ways website at <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/salty-bright-and-good-service-prayers-for-the-5th-sunday-after-epiphany-year-a-february-9-2020/>.)

Song 94 - To God be the Glory

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vbGFupxwu0&list=RD3vbGFupxwu0&start_radio=1

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,
so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to ev'ry believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord...

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath
done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord...

Scripture: Micah 6:1-8 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 Matthew 5:1-12

Hymn - Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA6NPDPtjUc&list=RDVA6NPDPtjUc&start_radio=1

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love
Show us how to serve
The neighbours we have from you

Kneels at the feet of his friends
Silently washes their feet
Master who pours out his love
For them.

Neighbours are rich and poor
Neighbours are black and white
Neighbours are near and far away

Jesu, Jesu...

These are the ones we should serve
These are the ones we should love
All are our neighbours to you.
Kneels at the feet of our friends,
Silently washing their feet
This is the way we should live
With you.

Jesu, Jesu...

Prayer

God our deliverer, you walk with the meek and the poor, the compassionate and those who mourn, and you call us to walk humbly with you.

When we are foolish, be our wisdom; when we are weak, be our strength; that, as we learn to do justice and to love mercy, your rule may come as blessing. Amen.

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Reflection

I often wonder what makes church and our worship meaningful, both for us and for God?

Oftentimes, I think church is about our comfort. The church service has been good and meaningful when we've sung the songs we know and love, when the message has been relevant to my needs, when I've got the blessing, I was looking for. And so church becomes a type of a club built around my expectations.

I wonder if this is what makes Jesus happy?

As we look to the example of Jesus he was constantly challenging the religious people and the way they worshipped. In this he continues the tradition of the Old Testament prophets like Micah who proclaim that God desires something more than empty worship. Micah says very simply that God requires of us to "act justly and to love mercy [or kindness] and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8b, NIV).

Coming out of our Covenant services we're reminded that we are no longer our own, but God's, and that serving God doesn't always mean doing the things that bring us joy.

We remember that Jesus doesn't say that we must worship him, rather that we should follow him, and the places he leads us to are often uncomfortable and not to our liking, but those may be the very places that need justice and mercy and humility. I wonder what it would mean for us to move our worship out of the sanctuary and find way not just to do justice mercy and humility, but to proclaim that message in our world - a world that seems so short of those qualities - today?

Prayer of response and Intercession

Sisters and brothers,
let us lift our hearts in faith
to the one who hears all prayers
and holds close all those in need.

Prayers of the People, concluding with:

Holy God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring healing to all wounds, make whole all that is broken, speak truth to all illusion, and shed light in every darkness, that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

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Hymn 707 - Make me a Channel of Your Peace

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYz14jEoaeU&list=RDFYz14jEoaeU&start_radio=1

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving of ourselves that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Closing Blessing

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore.