

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2026

Gathering  
Welcome  
Announcements and Prayer

Birthday Celebration

Prelude Christopher A. McCroskey  
*(Prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)*

\*Call to Worship  
In God,  
**we live and move and have our being.**  
In God,  
**we strive to trust and obey.**  
Following Jesus,  
**we learn the ways of peace and love.**  
Through Christ,  
**we have the promise of life, abundant and eternal.**

\*Opening Hymn *"Because He Lives"* 364

\*Opening Prayer  
**Loving God,**  
**You hold us in a parent's warm embrace, teaching us to love others, and to grow in faith. As your beloved children, we seek your guidance and protection to abide in Christ's love together. Help us to be your community, working together for peace and justice and healing. Fill us with gratitude, and help us to dwell in your grace this hour and every hour. Amen.**

\*Psalter Psalm 66:8-20 *with Response* 790-791

\*Litany for Mother's Day Insert

\*Gloria Patri 70  
**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace: *Let us greet one another with love and peace.*

"Let the Children Come!"  
*(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children's Church.)*

Anthem *"Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"* Choir

Scripture Lesson 1 Peter 3:13-22 Page 224 (N.T.)

\*Gospel Lesson John 14:15-21 Page 105 (N.T.)

Scripture Lesson Acts 17:22-31 Page 131 (N.T.)  
Sermon Fumbling About for God Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

\*Hymn of Invitation *"Be Still, My Soul"* 534

Prayer of the People Insert

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.**

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings  
Offertory Christopher A. McCroskey

\*Doxology 95

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him all creatures here below; praise him above ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen**

Closing Hymn *"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"* 133

\*Benediction

\*Benediction Response *"May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You"* Choir & Congregation

\*Please Stand As You Are Able

### Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: Rev. Darlene L. Kelley AV Director: Marie Stiles  
Music Director: Christopher A. McCroskey AV Assistant: Chris Derrick; Erin Derrick  
Liturgist: Tom Geddens Time Together: Celia Perez

**VISITORS ARE WELCOME** in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor's tags (located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning.

**Today's Lovely Flowers** are given to the **Glory of God** in honor of **all Mothers** and in loving memory of **Arnold Heiting** on what would have been their 41<sup>st</sup> Anniversary, by Annie.

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS ...

Marie Stiles Marilyn Lloyd Ruth Frady Rhett Hook Raleigh Carter Christopher McCroskey  
John Ballentine Diane Muszynski Ray Frady Latson Lewis English Pearcy Jeanette Hornsby  
Hannah Glanz Hilda Edwards Fran Laska Kaye Floyd Libby Strickland Jan Stamps

**Shut-Ins:** Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch

**Family and Friends:** **Otis A. McCroskey** (father of Christopher McCroskey); **Connie Crouch** (friend of Mary Sue Lewis); **Kristie Carter** (niece of Faye Grahl); **George Hough** (brother of Mary Louise Robinson); **Cody Linholm** (husband of Taylor Linholm); **Donna Eidson** (former Trinity pastor); **Ghent Brewer** (brother-in-law of Jeanette Hornsby); **Kim & Sandra Meetze** (friends of Martha Cooke); **Matt Imel** (husband of Holley Gleaton Imel); **Cayla Watters** (friend of Karen Carter); **Tommy Stokes** (nephew of Joyce Robinson); **Kati Flowers** (mother of friend of Blake Kamoroff); **Christina Lindemuth** (daughter of Karen Carter); **Kathleen Varnadore** (Ted & Ruth Frady’s neighbor); **Paul Frenzel** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Sissy Henry** (former member of Trinity), **Colby Martin** (son of Donna Muszynski); **Lynne Powell** (friend of the Ballentines and Branhams); **Bryan Collard** (brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis); **Mary Davis** (daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland); **Connie Mason** (friend of Lynn Martin); **Nancy Wilson** (friend of Jeanette Hornsby); **David & Kristen Turner** (brother and sister-in-law of Pam Turner); **Chip Mixon** (friend of Tommy Gleaton); **James Boggs** (father of Claire Boggs); **Robert Bradley** (Business Associate of Simon Ross); **Monnie Tiller** (friend of Chris Derrick); **Adrin & Linda Hargett** (stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** (cousins of Gale Frady); **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** (friends of Gale Frady); **Janet Beck** (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at [trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com](mailto:trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com).

**OUR PRESENCE ...**

Attendance 05/03 SS: 13 Worship: 41

**OUR GIFTS ...**

General Fund 05/03 \$ 5,215.00

**OUR SERVICE...**

**OUR WITNESS.”**

**Upcoming Events**

**TODAY** Mother’s Day

Birthday Celebration

**05/11** Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

**05/12** Grieving with God, 11 a.m.

**05/13** T.a.G., 7 p.m.

**05/14** Exercise, 10:30 a.m.

**05/15** Office Closed

Dinner and a Movie, 6 p.m.

**05/16** Ladies Breakfast, 9:30 a.m.



**Ministers**  
**Pastor**  
**Resident Bishop**  
**District Superintendent**

**The Congregation**  
**Darlene L. Kelley**  
**Leonard Fairley**  
**Rev. Fran M. Elrod**

***Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.***

***Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform***



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**Grieving with God**  
**Tuesday, May 12**

All who are on the journey of grief are invited to join us on **Tuesday, May 12**, at **11 a.m.** in the Conference Room. Retired Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplain from Richland Hospital, Jerry Fonte, will facilitate the discussion.



On **Wednesday, May 20**, we will provide a **light lunch for six to 10 residents and staff members** from The Pines. Three or four volunteers are needed to help set-up, serve and clean up. Please let Darlene know if you can help.



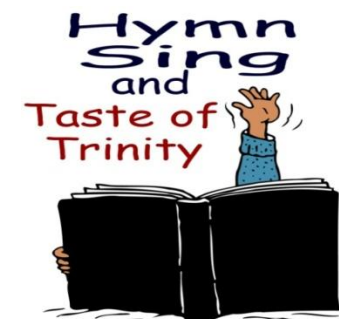
**Saturday, May 16**  
**(Change of Date)**  
**9:30 a.m.**

The Ladies Group will meet at Lizard's Thicket on Hwy #1 in Lexington, at 9:30 a.m. on May 16. Marie Stiles will send out an email each month to obtain your RSVP. If you are not on Marie's group email and wish to be added, contact her at 803.463.9706 or [mariebstyles@gmail.com](mailto:mariebstyles@gmail.com).



**Dinner/Brunch**  
**& A Movie**

There will be two opportunities to see the documentary *Happy* at Trinity. The first will be on **Friday evening, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.** and dinner will be served. The second will be on **Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> right after church** and brunch will be served. Invite your family and friends. This is not a children's movie, but is appropriate for anyone twelve and older. Watching this movie might make your life just a little better.



**Sunday, May 31**

On **Sunday, May 31**, we will have a combined **Hymn Sing and Taste of Trinity covered dish luncheon**. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for both the hymn sing and the luncheon. Plan now to join us and invite your friends as we sing our favorite hymns and enjoy our favorite foods.



**Administrative Team Meeting**

The Administrative Team will meet **next Sunday, May 17**, following the service. Members are Tom Geddens, Sue Ballentine, Chris Derrick, Ted Frady, Jo Ann Heiting, Brandon Jones, Bonnie Ramsey and Marie Stiles.



## Litany for Mother's Day

All who gather here are sons or daughters.

**We praise God for the women who gave us life.**

For mothers brave, strong, compassionate,  
full of wisdom and grace,

**We give God thanks and praise.**

For mothers vulnerable, worried, frustrated, and hurried,

**We pray for peace.**

For relationships that are strained and no longer a source of joy,

**We pray for healing.**

For mothers who have died, that no longer live with us,

but whose light shines on in our hearts and memories,

**We pray for those that mourn, and give God thanks  
for life eternal.**

For mothers who grieve, who have lost children born or unborn,

**We weep with those with broken hearts.**

For those who are struggling to raise children,  
who are tired and weary,

**We pray that we may be their village, offering  
real help in hard times.**

For those who are preparing emptier nests,

**We both celebrate and mourn with you, and hope their wings are as strong  
as their roots are deep.**

For stepmothers, navigating the pitfalls and joys of  
creating a new family,

**We pray for wisdom and patience.**

For grandmothers who are doing the hard work  
of raising children again,

**We pray the caregivers have those who care for them.**

For those who are waiting and sometimes struggling with the biological process to  
bring new life, and for those who are waiting for the adoptive process to be fulfilled.

**We wait eagerly with you, and offer you  
our hand to hold in the trial.**

For women who do not have children, but instead teach, lead, care for, and guide the children of  
others,

**We give God thanks and praise.**

For the mothers, sisters, daughters in our midst and around the world. For the women who,  
created in the image of God, give not just life, but abundant life. For women fighting,  
struggling, and sweating for the sake of others.

**For women caring, compassionate, and crying  
with the heart of Christ.**

For the caregivers, prophets, preachers, teachers, leaders, shepherds, healers.

**For Moms, in their wide variety and many forms, we give God thanks and praise.**

(Permission to use this litany for public worship is granted. If it will be reprinted in worship bulletin, please attribute with  
link: <http://fatpastor.me>.)

## PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

*(inspired by John 15:9-17)*

Eternal God, in these moments of quiet we thank you for your presence in our lives. We  
thank you for all of the testimonies of your profound love for your children. We especially  
thank you this day for the holy one Jesus. We thank you for his humility. We thank you  
that rather than elevating himself above us he instead would lift us up and as with his  
disciples call us "friends." We thank you for his many reminders that we are to love one  
another. But we confess that we have great difficulty following his command to love.

**We become upset with others and find it easier to reject them than to seek to understand  
and to love them.**

**We struggle with the almost impossible command to love our enemies. Help us, we pray.  
Amen.**

Kelley

## Fumbling About for God

Most of us here this morning have been blessed with moments in our lives that may have seemed insignificant at the time but made all the difference—God moments that lead us down a certain path or toward an unexpected goal. One of my best God moments occurred when I was a freshman in college trying to fill a spot in my schedule. There was an elective: Introduction to Philosophy. I didn't even know what philosophy was, but the class was at 1:30, and that was the spot I needed to fill.

Two years later, I was creating a major that included philosophy, and years later when I was entering seminary, I realized how truly blessed I'd been: philosophy and theology are sisters, and I knew at least one of those sisters pretty well. That God moment my freshman year exempted me out of a few classes in seminary twenty years later.

And this morning's Scripture lesson brings it all together. Here we are in Athens with Paul and the story of *the unknown god*. In order to give you the best background for this story, I defer to Robert Deffinbaugh from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a story he tells in his article entitled:

*The Apostle in Athens, Preaching to Philosophers (Acts 17:15-34)*: Diffenbaugh writes:

*In short, the story begins sometime in the sixth century before Christ, with the city of Athens being devastated and decimated by a mysterious plague. When no explanation for the plague could be found, and no cure was in sight, the approach was to assume that one of the city's many gods had been offended. The leaders of the city sought to determine which of the gods it was and then determine a way of appeasing that god. This was no easy task, since the city of Athens had literally hundreds of gods, the "god capital of the world," a place so full of gods that the Athenians "must have needed something equivalent to the Yellow Pages just to keep tabs on the many deities already represented in their city".*

*When all efforts failed to discern which god had been offended, and which had brought the plague upon the city, an outside "consultant" was brought in from the Island of Cyprus, whose name was Epimenides.*

*Epimenides concluded that it was none of the known gods of Athens, which had been offended, but some, as yet, unknown god. He proposed a course of action, which, if it worked, would at least provide a possible remedy for the plague. He had a flock of choice sheep, of various colors, kept from food until they were hungry. On the given day, he had these sheep turned loose on Mars Hill, on what was a very succulent pasture. For any sheep not to eat his fill would have been unexplainable. He had the sheep turned loose and watched carefully, to see if any sheep would lie down and not eat, even though hungry and in prime grazing. Several sheep, to the amazement of those watching, did lie down. Altars were erected at each spot where a sheep lay down, dedicated to an "unknown god." On those altars, the sheep, which lay in that spot, was sacrificed. Almost immediately, we are told, the plague began to subside.*

*Over a period of time, the altars were forgotten, and began to deteriorate. One altar, it seems, was restored and preserved, in commemoration of the removal of the plague by calling upon the "unknown god." Who would have thought that centuries later, a foreigner named Paul would refer to this altar as the starting point for his sermon on Mars Hill? And who would have known that it may have been this very poet, Epimenides, whom Paul would later quote in his sermon? <sup>1</sup> (Thank you, Professor Diffenbaugh).*

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<sup>1</sup> Deffinbaugh, Robert, "The Apostle in Athens, Preaching to Philosophers (Acts 17:15-34), bible.org, online resource.

This is a rich background story for this morning's Scripture lesson. A plague and an altar to "an unknown god" and Paul inspired enough by it all to quote poetry: *In him we live and move and have our being.*

Paul shares what may have been part of an ancient poem by Epimenides, the "consultant" responsible for the altar to the unknown god—a fitting quote for the crowd gathered on Mars Hill.

And quoting poetry, Paul shares one of the best lines ever written about God: *In him we live and move and have our being.*

As a preacher, Paul must have felt blessed indeed. He didn't have to stay up late on Saturday night wrestling with a starting point for his sermon. Paul had the best starting point he could hope for; he'd just seen it with his own eyes: an altar to an unknown god. And when Paul saw this altar, he knew he was talking to people who thought about God—people who looked for God, people curious enough to be interested in God, reverent people who respected ideas and sought understanding. Paul had a great audience standing out there on Mars Hill, and he made use of the moment.

*'Athenians, Paul called out: I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god."*

*What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.*

*From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said...*

Paul is trying to hold his own in a city of philosophers, and he's been having a rough time lately. In Thessalonica, his preaching incites a riot and he has to leave town—only to be followed to the next town by the same mob that wants to kill him in Thessalonica. He escapes to Athens, sent away by friends who are trying to save his life, separated from the friends who traveled with him, preaching the good news. And Paul is left in Athens, waiting for Silas and Timothy to catch up with him when the coast is clear.

Acts 17:16 begins: *While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the market-place\* every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him. Some said, 'What does this babbling man want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.' (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus (literally translated as "Rock of Ares", not only a hill but a high court where they debate ideas) and asked him, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.'*

Paul is definitely on the spot now. He's been run out of town during his last two stops, and now he's in Athens being asked to explain his beliefs. Athens: a city described in Acts 17: 21: *Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.*

This is a tough crowd, a seasoned crowd, a crowd with a lot of philosophical experience. And Paul uses poetry to persuade them. Yet, inside the poetry, a beautiful piece of theology grows: God makes the nations, *so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him*---God creates us that we might search for God.

*Though indeed, Paul concludes, he is not far from each one of us.*

*For "In him we live and move and have our being" ...*

The image we hold of God makes an incredible difference in our lives.

What we think of God, how we feel about God, whether or not we give God any thought at all---time spent with God has profound consequences for our lives.

Created in God's image, humanity longs for relationship. Right at the top of our Creation story, God says: *It is not good that the man should be alone...* (Gen. 2:18). We were created to be in relationship, and the wonderful news that Paul preaches from Mars Hill is that God created us so that we would search and fumble and find relationship with God.

*Though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.*

Despite the poetry and the beauty of his message, Paul didn't exactly wow the crowd on Mars Hill. The end of Acts 17 tells us: *When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, 'We will hear you again about this.'* Even Paul can't win them all.

Yet the last line of the chapter tells us: *But some of them joined him and became believers...*

And some of us here today will search and fumble about and find God, *for he is not far from each one of us, and in him we live and move and have our being.* Amen.