



Pillars of Faith

WELCOME

We are so happy you are with us. Please add your voice and heart to the prayers. Help others find a place near you and greet the person next to you as we prepare to worship together. Please stand and sit as you are comfortable.

Pillars of Faith

Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Our 4-week sermon series is an introduction to the “pillars of faith” we can all follow—not just those individuals who stand out in our story, but the **markers of faith** we can follow as we strive to live with utter trust in God.

A **cairn** is a kind of pillar—a man-made pile or stack of stones raised as a marker or as a burial mound. The word *cairn* comes from the Scottish Gaelic: *càrn*. Cairns are often raised as landmarks and are also used as **trail markers**.

Rock of Ages

We do not often, if ever, hear the hymn “Rock of Ages” in the Episcopal Church. It was written in 1776 by the Reformed Anglican minister Augustus Toplady. There is a popular story (that most hymnologists do not believe) about the origin of the text. The claim is that Toplady drew his inspiration from an incident in the gorge of Burrington Combe in England. Toplady was traveling along the gorge when he was caught in a storm. Finding shelter in a gap in the gorge, he was struck by the title and scribbled down the initial lyrics.

For nearly two centuries the hymn was sung in every major Christian tradition of the English-speaking world—Calvinist, Arminian, High Church, Low Church, and even some Roman Catholic communities—before disappearing from a few mainline hymnals in the 1970s, presumably because of its insistence on human bankruptcy and the need for vicarious atonement (rather than the goodness of creation, including humanity, and the call to union with God).

Still, this is the song to sing when weary and heavy-laden travelers decide we’ve had enough of our own efforts to save ourselves and turn to Christ, believing that he is both willing and able to save, indeed that it is he who is the **rock** upon which our life is anchored, the **cairn** to mark the way, the **cleft** (a sheltering gap) in the storms of life.

We will hear several versions and variations of this hymn in the next four weeks.

Sources

This liturgy is prepared to complement the “Pillars of Faith” sermon series from A *Preacher’s Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series: Thematic Plans for Years A, B, and C* (p. 232). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

All prayer texts are drawn from a wide variety of resources by the Worship Committee at St. John’s. They are either gently adapted or rigorously reworked for the purpose of these four weeks of drawing out the themes of how faith acts, what it looks for, what it can accomplish and how it strengthens us. We cannot work without resources, but the final words of this bulletin may not resemble their original forms.

Gathering – Feasting on the Word

Prayers – Feasting on the Word, and Litany of the Stones, from *In Due Season, Volume 2: Prayer for Spring, Lent, Easter & Summer Feastdays*, ©2015, Ken Phillips.

Affirmation of Faith – Tim Glatzer

Offertory, Eucharistic Prayer, Thanksgiving and Sending – Megan Nickles

Breaking Bread – Enriching Our Worship

Prelude

“My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less,” David Nevue

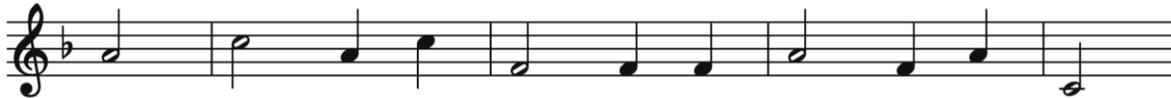
Opening Hymn *Verses 1-3*



1. How firm a founda - tion, you saints of the Lord,
2. “Fear not, I am with you, O be not dis-mayed,
3. “When through the deep wa - ters I call you to go,
4. “The soul that on Je - sus still leans for re - pose,



1. Is laid for your faith in his ex - cel - lent Word!
2. For I am your God, and will still give you aid;
3. The riv - ers of woe shall not you o - ver - flow;
4. I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;



1. What more can he say than to you he has said,
2. I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
3. For I will be with you, your trou - bles to bless,
4. That soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,



1. To you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
2. Up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand.”
3. And sanc - ti - fy to you, your deep - est dis - tress.”
4. I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er for - sake!”

Text: 11 11 11 11; “K” in Rippon’s *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787.
Music: Funk’s *A Compilation of Genuine Church Music*, Winchester, VA, 1832.

Gathering

The Lord is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him.
He raises the poor from the dust,
He lifts the needy from the ash heap.
He makes them sit with nobles,
and inherit a seat of honor;
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,
And He set the world on them.

Psalm 50:1-8, 23

- ¹ The Lord God Most Powerful has spoken.
He calls to everyone on earth, from where the sun rises to where it sets.
- ² God appeared from Zion, the city of perfect beauty.
- ³ Our God is coming and will not keep quiet.
Fire burns in front of him. There is a great storm around him.
- ⁴ He tells the sky and the earth to be witnesses
as he judges his people.
- ⁵ He says, “My followers, gather around me.
Come, my worshipers, who made an agreement with me.”
- ⁶ God is the judge, and the skies tell how fair he is.
- ⁷ God says, “My people, listen to me!
People of Israel, I will show my evidence against you.
I am God, your God.
- ⁸ The problem I have with you is not your sacrifices
or the burnt offerings you bring to me everyday.
- ²³ Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way, I will show the salvation of God.”

Scripture

We sit.

Like a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night,
may the holy scriptures guide us
that we may hear your word with clarity and hope.

The word of the Lord endures for ever.

After the Reading

Word of God, word of strength.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Prayers

God of blessing, you fling the stars into the heavens and show us more blessings than we can count, and you hear our prayers.

We pray for your world, wounded and scarred: heal earth's body, and lead us to care.

We pray for your church, divided and distressed: unite us in mission, and grow us in love.

We pray for the lost, the forgotten, the lonely: gather them in and help us shelter them.

We pray for the addicted: save them and strengthen them.

We pray for those who have no hope: give them faith in you.

We pray for the greedy: make them generous.

We pray for the poor: sustain them and give them hope.

We pray for all those whose burdens we carry in our hearts, and offer them up to you, especially __: heal, comfort, and guide them, make them whole.

We commit ourselves to building a faith on the foundations of hope, forgiveness, and love.

When we pursue violence rather than understanding,
help us to let go of the stones of anger and rage.

When we choose religious and nationalistic prejudice rather than compassion,
help us to let go of the stones of hardened hearts.

When we would strike out in physical or emotional violence rather than do the work of healing,
help us to let go of the stones of fear.

When we prefer to live as enemies rather than work together for the well-being of the human family,
help us to let go of the stones of aggression.

When we opt to give into cynicism and despair rather than embrace the truth of our goodness,
help us to let go of the stones of self-contempt.

When we might allow the work of justice and peacemaking to be done by others rather than to engage in it ourselves,
help us to let go of the stones of inertia.

When we turn away our sight from the needs of those in our midst rather than respond as we are able,
help us to let go of the stones of blindness.

Let us pray together:

O Tender God, in the journey that is before us, these stones weigh our spirits down. Grant that we be open to the wisdom, insight, and grace to cast these stones into pillars of faith, into the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Receive the prayers of your faithful people for our hearts are gladdened by our trust in you. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

We stand.

We believe in God,
who called forth the world by his word
who called forth a nation through the Red Sea
who called forth the prophets and martyrs into history
who calls us forth to live in faith.

We believe in Jesus,
who came to set the world aflame
who came to us with burning faith
who came to heal in the temples and the synagogues
who came to accept a baptism of suffering
who came again from the suffering, living anew
who comes again, a model for humble faith.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who brings us together for the great feast
who brings first the poor, the crippled, and the blind
who brings us to the city God has prepared for us
who brings us together
who first brought us faith.

We believe that we will be healed of our fractures and fissures.
We believe that we will be set free from the fallenness of this world.
We believe that God has more planned for us.
We believe that we will be united in God's blessing for all time.
We believe that even when our belief stumbles upon the stones of doubt,
God restores our faith.
Amen.

The Peace

May the Peace of God be always with you.
And also with you.
We greet each other in the name of Jesus.

Announcements

Invitation to the Offering

In gratitude, let us offer all that we have and all that we are for the love of Christ, the foundation and root of our faith.

Music

“Rock a My Soul,” Chanticleer.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord is with you.

and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift our hearts to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

God of eternity, we give you thanks and praise
that you ground us in the geology of time
and anchor our faithfulness to the towers of creation that surround us.

You meet us as you met Isaac and Jacob in the tents of our transience
and prepare us as you prepared Abraham for the city of joy.

You stack pillars of faith who mark the path of sacred story:
people who passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land,
people who watched the massive stone walls of Jericho fall
on the way to the promised land.

We make ourselves strangers and foreigners to you,
yet you greet us in your Son.

In Jesus, you set us free from our sickness
and when we are bent over, you stand us up straight upon the rock of salvation.

In his death on the pillar of the cross, and in his resurrection,
you bring us home to be the people of your possession.

And so we gladly thank you, with all the angels and the company of heaven,
saying the hymn of your unending praise

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Loving God, you pour yourself out from the temple,
down the rock beds into the high desert of our lives to quench our thirst.
You feed us with holy food that we may never hunger again.

In the evening before he died, Jesus was at the table with the twelve followers.
While they were eating, Jesus took bread and thanked God for it.
He broke off pieces, gave them to his followers and said,
“Take this bread and eat it. It is my body.”

Then he took a cup of wine, thanked God for it, and gave it to them. He said,
“Each one of you drink of it. This wine is my blood,
which will be poured out to forgive the sins of many
and begin the new agreement from God to his people.”

Great is the mystery of faith.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

God of steadfast love,
send down upon us your gifts of wisdom, knowledge,
and faith, of healing, discernment, and trust,
that your Church may be built up in the likeness of your Son.
Come among us now through the power of your Spirit,
among the cornerstones of the church,
that we may be transformed into your image,
and that these gifts of bread and wine may become for us
the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

Holy God, as we know your Son, in the power of your spirit,
to be present in this bread and wine, open our eyes to see your presence
in the places and people you make known in your glory:
People who through faith conquered kingdoms,
administered justice, obtained promises,
shut the mouths of lions, quenched raising fire;
people who were mocked, who suffered chains of imprisonment;
people who wandered in deserts and mountains,
who gave birth, made bricks, offered coins,
fed the hungry, and wrote letters –
all these, commended for their faith,
who humbled themselves yet are exalted in your kingdom.

Draw us with them and our whole creation into voices of praise,
as living stones, crying out in a rumble of your praise,
until we are ever one with you,
God, our savior, and our friend.

AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

We pray in the words Jesus taught.
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,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Breaking Bread

The leader breaks the Bread. Silence is kept.
We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.
We who are many are one body
for we all share in the one bread.
God's gifts for God's people.

The Communion

We approach the Altar beginning with those sitting in the last rows; they shall be first.
Take a cup from the table to the left of the rail. Find a place at the rail and stand or kneel. A server will pour wine into your cup, another will place bread in your hand. Our bread is handmade. If you prefer a wafer, please ask. You may receive only bread or only wine, or both.
The Holy Eucharist is the central act of worship in The Episcopal Church. All are welcome.

Music

"Rock of Ages," Chris Rice.
"Solid Rock," Page cxvi.

Thanksgiving

We stand.

Let us pray.

In gratitude, O God,
we have come to your table,
into your presence, into your house.
For all that you have done for us,
the bread, the wine, the Word, the song,
for bringing us to lean on the pillar of Jesus Christ,
we offer our thanks and praise.

We are no longer foreigners and aliens,
but fellow citizens with God's people
and members of God's household,
built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.
In him the whole building is joined together
and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.
Amen.

Closing Hymn

We repeat the refrain after the last verse

1. Great is thy faith - ful - ness, O God my Fa - ther,
 2. Sum - mer and win - ter, and spring - time and har - vest,
 3. Par - don for sin and a peace that en - dur - eth,

There is no shad - ow of turn - ing with thee;
 Sun, moon and stars in their cours - es a - bove,
 Thine own dear pres - ence to cheer and to guide;

Thou chang - est not, thy com - pas - sions, they fail not,
 Join with all na - ture in man - i - fold wit - ness,
 Strength for to - day and bright hope for to - mor - row,

As thou has been thou for ev - er wilt be.
 To thy great faith - ful - ness, mer - cy and love.
 Bless - ings all mine, with ten thou - sand be - side!

Refrain, next page

Great is thy faith - ful - ness! Great is thy faith - ful - ness!

Morn - ing by morn - ing new mer - cies I see;

All I have need - ed thy hand hath pro - vid - ed,

Great is thy faith - ful - ness, Lord un - to me!

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1866–1960
 Tune: FAITHFULNESS, 11 10 11 10 with refrain; William M. Runyan, 1870–1957
 © 1923, 1951, Hope Publishing Company

Sending

It is God who has firmly set the pillars of the universe.
Go now, rejoicing in the shelter of the rock.
We go in peace to love and serve. Alleluia!

Postlude

“Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land,” Dave Lemieux.