



**“From You Comes My Praise:  
Guide My Steps”  
Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**Prelude: *This Is the Day of New Beginnings*  
Welcome**

**GATHERING OUR STRENGTH**

**Threshold**

We are a resurrection people! Those who seek new life – new beginnings. And we, the church, must be a place of knowing and growing and accepting love. We hear today the question asked by the Ethiopian eunuch: “Here is water. What is to keep me from being baptized?” As we dance into diversity and acceptance, may the Spirit guide our steps for nothing is keeping us from it!

**Dare to dance with dreamers, sing their song,  
Dare to dance their stories, sing out strong.  
Dare to dance with freedom your whole life long,  
Dare to dance again!**

*Leader:* Dancing requires that we pay attention to the steps, that we watch for the steps of those who have danced this dance of life before – those whose seeking and questioning and dreaming can lead us to seek and hope and dream. Imagine now a dreamer in whose steps you would like to follow. How did they choreograph their dance of life? Now, imagine yourself following their steps with courage and joy!

**Dare to dance with dreamers, sing their song,  
Dare to dance their stories, sing out strong.  
Dare to dance with freedom your whole life long,  
Dare to dance again!**

This is the call! Look to the skies be it rain or shine.

***People:* We lift up our heads to meet the day.**

Look around and see that you do not dance alone.

**We fortify our hearts with compassion and action.**

If rain still lingers, open the umbrellas of praise and set out anyway.

**For we are called to dance again!**

**Opening Song of Praise**    “*Guide My Feet*”    FWS 2208

**Prayer**

Holy One, Justice-Seeker, Lover of Creation –

Open us to learn new steps of faithfulness.

Give us courage and patience.

Come and dance with us, engage with us, as we seek you –  
so that we can be risen with Christ and in Christ.

Be with us now, we pray. Amen.

## **Affirming the Peace Among Us**

The peace of the risen Christ is with you! **And also with you!**  
You are invited to turn to the people around you  
and wave as a sign of graceful greetings this day.

**Dare to dance with dreamers, sing their song,  
Dare to dance their stories, sing out strong.  
Dare to dance with freedom your whole life long,  
Dare to dance again!**

## **LEARNING THE STEPS**

**A Story for All Ages** (Children's Time)

This week's dreamer: Marian Anderson

*Each Sunday, we introduce the children to the story of a "dreamer"—a public figure—someone who brought their unique "dance" to the world and made it a better place.*

Marian Anderson was a singer. And she was an African-American woman. Now, that's not so unusual, is it? We hear lots of black people sing – right? But Marian was a CLASSICAL singer; she sang opera! When she was growing up – and even when she was an adult – no one had ever seen or heard an African-American opera singer!

Plus... Marian's family was poor, and being an opera singer means that you need lots of voice lessons, which her parents couldn't afford. But Marian had a dream - a dream to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, something that no other black person had ever done.

So, she kept on trying. Marian sang in her church choir and taught herself all she could, until she finally found a teacher and some friends paid for her lessons. She said that "When you stop having dreams and ideals - well, you might as well stop altogether." She didn't stop! She kept on dreaming and kept on trying.

It wasn't always easy. She was kept out of a music school because she was black. After that happened, she said, "I was terribly crushed, terribly disappointed." Holding onto her dreams finally paid off. She became the first African-American to sing in an opera at the Metropolitan Opera in New York!

But, maybe the best part of Marian's dreams was that she used her accomplishments to work for racial equality – like Martin Luther King – but she did it with her singing. She said that her dream was "to leave behind me the kind of impression that will make it easier for those who follow." She wanted to pass her dream on – and she did. Now many African-American men and women sing opera here and all around the world – thanks to Marian Anderson's dream!

Our colorful umbrellas are a sign of joy and hope, even on rainy days. Today we'll add a phrase from Ms. Anderson on our prayer umbrella: "Sing what you love!"

Let's offer a repeat-after-me-prayer:

"We offer thanks for dreamers true, for all they are, and all they do

Let us become dreamers too and bring new life to me and you. **Amen!**

## A Story for the Ages

### First Reading: Psalm 22:25-31 (NRSV, adapted)

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear God. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Holy One shall praise the Lord. May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. For dominion belongs to the One who rules over the nations. To this One, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; and I shall live for God alone.

Posterity will serve God; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim God's divine deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that God indeed has done it.

### Second Reading: Acts 8:26-39 (NRSV, adapted)

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The eunuch replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him....He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

### Second Reading: John 15: 1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

### Sounds of Resurrection "Order My Steps"

#### Sermon

#### Dancing for All We're Worth

*(Video of the Week)*

## THE BODY MOVES IN RESPONSE

### Prayers of the People

*"Teach Me to Dance" [refrain only]*

**Sung:** Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart,

teach me to move in the power of your Spirit,

teach me to [move] in the light of your presence, teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.

*Leader:* For the beauty of the world in all its diversity, we give you thanks, O God.

*Leader: Let us pray together...*

*People:* **May our gratitude to you fill our days.**

*Leader:* We need your healing, O Holy One, for our troubled planet, for our nation, for all who are struggling in body, mind, relationships, and spirit.

We remember those who are suffering...

*[Continue with your prayers of petition....]*

*Leader: Let us pray together...*

*People:* **Come, O God, and restore our lives.**

*Sung:* **Teach me to pray in the power of Easter,  
following Christ in a life resurrected,**

**teach me to act with compassion and justice, teach me to dance with the beat of your heart.**

Be with each of us now. May the dance of your Spirit ever call us to engage with you and with the needs around us. Lead us; guide us; surround and fill us.

*Leader: Let us pray together...*

**People: Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

*Sung:* **Teach me to love with your heart of compassion,  
teach me to trust in the word of your promise,  
teach me to hope in the day of your coming, teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.**

### **Offering Our Resources and our Energy**

How has the testimony of the people in our lives and through the generations guided our steps into dances of praise at the good news that we are loved and blessed?

What transformation is possible as we abide with God and “find our groove” of praise with the congregation? Let us pool our resources and order our steps to bring life and wholeness to the larger community through our offerings this day.

## **STEPPING OUT**

**Song for Stepping Out**

*“Lead Me, Guide Me” FWS 2214*

### **Benediction**

*Leader:* Poet and songwriter Leonard Cohen penned these words that we can surely lift to God:

“Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in  
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove Dance me to the end of love

Oh, let me see your beauty when the witnesses are gone

Let me feel you moving like they do in Babylon

Show me slowly what I only know the limits of Dance me to the end of love.”

May we follow the lead of the Spirit as we find expansive ways to dance the dance of love.

And may the Loving God, Risen Christ, and Dancing Spirit fill you with all you need for the days ahead. And all God's people said, **“Amen!”**

## **Postlude**