



# Christ Lutheran

CHURCH

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**March 17, 2024**

## **We Welcome You to Christ Lutheran Church! We are a community of people sharing God's love through Christ and growing together in faith.**

We celebrate all the ways we are made in the image of God, seeking to see God in everyone. We honor and respect each person's age, ethnicity, family composition, gender identity, gender expression, life history, mental well-being, physical ability, relationship status, sexual orientation, skin color, and socioeconomic standing. Together, we strive to love and serve our neighbor and all creation, including working toward racial and social justice. We would love to walk with you on this creative adventure\* of faith, grace, and love.

*\* The first sermon ever preached at Christ Lutheran was titled "A Call to Creative Adventure."*

### **ABOUT WORSHIP**

We gather to worship weekly to hear and remember our shared hope: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ makes all things new, even us.

You will find everything that happens in worship printed in this bulletin, with hymns found in the red hymnals ("ELW") in the seats in front on you.

If you have a prayer request, note it on a yellow card from the seatback holder and pass it to an usher; the other side is for any information you would like about Christ Lutheran. Please feel welcome to remain seated as necessary during the service.

### **CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME IN CHURCH!**

God's people come in all shapes and sizes – it is a gift to the whole community when the smallest of us are present! Sitting with parents and learning to treasure times of worship is the foundation for helping build a growing faith in a child's life. There's some noise and movement that we expect from little ones - feel free to make use of the **activity bags, doodle pads, bookshelf in the overflow area and cry room at the back of the sanctuary** as needed. Whatever sacrifice of energy and effort you make to include your children in worship is multiplied as the good news of God's love takes root in their lives!

### **WHEN NURSERY CARE IS NEEDED DURING WORSHIP**

A fully equipped and staffed Nursery is available for both infants and toddlers during all services. The Nursery is located west of our gathering area in **Room 110**.

### **RESTROOMS**

Men's and women's restrooms off the Gathering Area and Church Hall have changing tables, as does the all-gender restroom near the nursery. A second all-gender restroom is through the Vestry off the East hallway, past the Welcome Center.

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

**Holy Communion** is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

Our services are on video, and occasional photographs are taken for our website and e-mail news. If you have concerns, please speak to a church staff member.

*Hearing assistance devices are available to those who need help with listening to the service and are located at the entrance to the sanctuary, or please see an Usher for assistance.*

**A Reminder: Please turn off all cell phones during worship services.**

*God promises Jeremiah that a “new covenant” will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God’s heart through Christ and draws God’s love and truth into our hearts. We join together in worship, sharing in word, song, and meal, and leave strengthened to share God’s love with all the world.*

## **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God*

### **PRELUDE**

*Fantasia in C minor*

J.S. Bach

### **WELCOME**

*If you are joining us for the first time, welcome! We’d love to meet you, or if there’s anything you’d like to know about the ministry of Christ Lutheran Church, please consider [filling out a Connection Card online](#) (you can point your phone at the graphic to the right) or using a yellow Connection Card in the pew holders.*



***Prayer requests** can be posted to the livechat or use a yellow Prayer Request (on the backside of the Connection Card) and give them to an usher.*

*If you are worshipping with us via livestream, consider **preparing your space for Communion**: light a candle (if appropriate and safe), and have a plate with bread/cracker/tortilla and a cup for wine or grape juice (or an empty cup as a sign Jesus is sufficient in one or both elements).*

### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,  
who writes the law on our hearts,  
who draws all people together through Jesus.  
**Amen.**

Held in God’s mercy, let us confess our sin  
in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Holy God,  
we confess that we are caught in snares of sin  
and cannot break free.  
We hoard resources while our neighbors  
are hungry and cold.  
We speak in ways that silence others.  
We are silent when we should speak up.  
We keep score in our hearts.  
We let hurts grow into hatred.  
For all these things and for sins only you know,  
forgive us, Lord.  
**Amen.**

Here is a flood of grace:  
Out of love for the whole world,  
God draws near to us,  
breaks every snare of sin,  
washes away our wrongs,  
and restores the promise of life through ✠ Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

*Children: This is the day that the Lord has made.*  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Lord of the new covenant,  
in Christ you draw  
all people to yourself:  
may we die with him  
to the powers of hate  
and let him show us  
a world loved by you,  
through Jesus Christ, the fruitful grain.  
**Amen.**

## WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.*

### **CHILDREN'S TIME**

*The assembly is seated as children are invited for a time together.*

#### **READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

*The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.*

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The Word of the Lord.

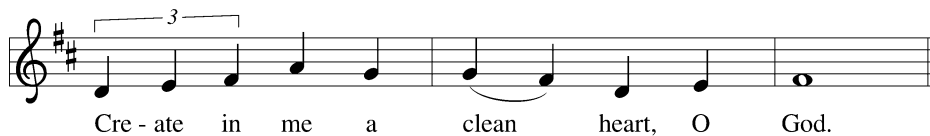
**Thanks be to God.**



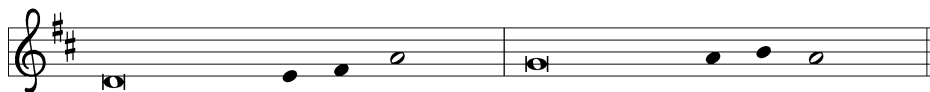
## PSALM: Psalm 51:1–12

*The congregation is invited to sing the psalm refrain when indicated (R). Verses will be chanted alternately by the leader and the people.*

### Refrain



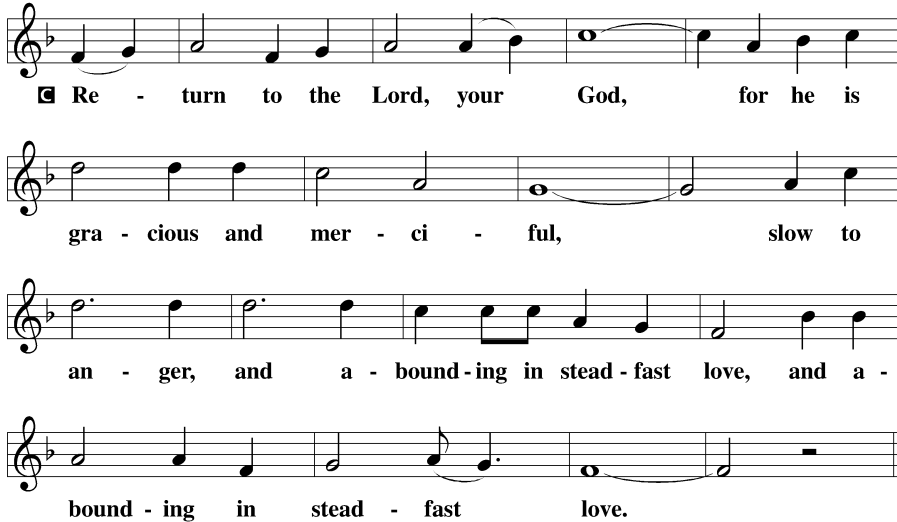
### Psalm Tone



- <sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your | steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out | my offenses.
- <sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through | from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me | from my sin.**
- <sup>3</sup>For I know | my offenses,  
and my sin is ev- | er before me.
- <sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil | in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right | in your judgment. R**
- <sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born | steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my | mother's womb.
- <sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth | deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom | deep within.**
- <sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I | shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be pur- | er than snow.
- <sup>8</sup>**Let me hear | joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken | may rejoice. R**
- <sup>9</sup>Hide your face | from my sins,  
and blot out | all my wickedness.
- <sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean | heart, O God,  
and renew a right spir- | it within me.**
- <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away | from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spir- | it from me.
- <sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of | your salvation  
and sustain me with your boun- | tiful Spirit. R**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.*



## HOLY GOSPEL: John 12:20-33

*Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here Jesus' words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.*

The Holy Gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>20</sup>Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. <sup>27</sup>"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup>The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup>Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup>And I, when I am

lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”<sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

*The assembly is seated. Time for reflection follows the sermon.*

## HYMN OF THE DAY ACS #958 *To Christ Belong, in Christ Behold*

*The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.*

1 To Christ be - long, in Christ be - hold God's  
2 The brood - ing Spir - it moves un - seen as  
3 Re - joic - ing in God's prom - ise strong, our

won - ders still un - fold: the bur - ied  
liv - ing wa - ters stream to quench all  
treasure and our song, in faith we

grain springs forth a - gain with fruit one hun - dred - fold.  
thirst and bring to birth a new com - mu - ni - ty.  
cling, and glad - ly sing: to Christ we now be - long.

Bap - tized in - to the death of Christ, with  
The bind - ing shroud is here re - leased, the  
In Christ a - bide, in Christ be - hold the

Christ from death we rise, drawn through the  
veil of sin and grief, and in their  
world be - loved and whole. In love re -

night by dawn - ing light in - to a - bun - dant  
place a wreath of grace and robes of joy and  
main, by love pro - claim God's won - ders still un -

life, in - to a - bun - dant life.  
peace, and robes of joy and peace.  
told, God's won - ders still un - told.



## APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*\*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.*

## PRAYERS

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of the covenant, through the church you draw us into community. We give thanks for the means of grace around which we gather. Inspire writers, musicians, and artists whose creative gifts adorn our worship. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of all that exists, you lavish the earth with extravagant beauty. Preserve the rich and complex diversity of living things. Support local, national, and international efforts to protect the environment for future generations. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of the nations, you desire peace and plenty for all people. Defend those who challenge oppression and expose corruption. Support advocates for human rights, social justice, and the welfare of children, including Lutheran World Relief, ELCA World Hunger, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. Tend to the lands, people, and churches of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of good will, you restore what is broken. We pray for any experiencing estrangement, conflict, or abuse in families and intimate relationships. Protect and comfort all who are vulnerable, especially those living in institutions. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of every time and place, you are with us. Support ministries of prayer and presence in this congregation, especially our Stephen Ministry, Caring Meals Ministry, and Caring Visitors. Move us to reach out to any who are homebound, lonely, grieving, in treatment, or ill. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God of promise, we give thanks for the saints whose faith inspires us – especially Joseph, Patrick, Thomas Cranmer, and Jonathan Edwards. Grant us faith to trust in your everlasting love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## ***WHO, ME?: OFFERING OUR INTENTIONS***

*The assembly is seated.*

# COMMITMENT HYMN #574

## *Here I Am, Lord*



1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo - ple cry.  
 2 "I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo - ple's pain.  
 3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.



All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.  
 I have wept for love of them. They turn a - way.  
 I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.



I, who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.  
 I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a - lone.  
 Fin-est bread I will pro - vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.



Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?"  
 I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?"  
 I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?"



Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you



call-ing in the night. I will go, Lord, if you



lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.

Text: Daniel L. Schutte, b. 1946

Music: HERE I AM, LORD, Daniel L. Schutte

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## SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*We invite those worshipping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the chat, and for those in person we turn to offer them our greeting of peace before sharing a sign of peace with one another: **Peace be with you!***

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ*

## OFFERING

*This congregation serves our neighbors, community, and the world through the participation and support of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with **Valpo New Creation Men's Shelter/Resale Shop** [newcreationempowers.org](http://newcreationempowers.org) + [www.facebook.com/newcreationresaleshop](https://www.facebook.com/newcreationresaleshop) and **Gabriel's Horn** [www.gabrielshelter.org](http://www.gabrielshelter.org)*



*If you wish to give electronically, use the QR code or browse to our secure on-line portal at [clcvalpo.org/give](http://clcvalpo.org/give) or use [our CLC app](#) (download at [clcvalpo.org/app](http://clcvalpo.org/app)).*

## OFFERTORY ANTHEM (8:00 am)

*Be Still*

Marrolli

*Be still and know that I am God; let peace embrace your heart. Be still and know that I am God; let fear and anguish now depart. Though the earthquakes rage, though the temples roll, though the storms conspire to destroy, be still and know that I am God: the earth shall rise again in joy. Be still and know that I am God; let tranquil hope fill your mind. Be still and know that I am God; let grief and trouble be left behind. Though the shadows fall, though the darkness cries, though the night seems endless and dire, be still and know that I am God: the morn shall rise in holy fire.*

## OFFERTORY (10:30 am)

*Fugue in C Major*

Pachelbel

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

*The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.*

Jesus, you are the bread of life  
**and the host of this meal.**  
**Bless these gifts that we have gathered**  
**that all people may know your goodness.**  
**Feed us not only with this holy food**  
**but with hunger for justice and peace.**  
**We pray this in your name.**  
**Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Lift up your hearts.  
**We lift them to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS

*(An ancient practice invites us to make the sign of the cross in honor of Jesus at the words "Blessed is he.")*



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,  
heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san-na. Ho-san - na. Ho - san-na in the high-est. Bless-ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high - est.

## TABLE PRAYER

### LORD'S PRAYER

*Children: The Spirit makes us one. We pray as Jesus taught us:*

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

### INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Bread for the journey.

A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

**Thanks be to God!**

*The assembly is seated.*

### DISTRIBUTION

*The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:*

The body of Christ, given for you.

**Amen (receive the bread)**

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**Amen (receive the cup)**

**In-person distribution:** When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. WINE is lighter-colored and GRAPE JUICE is dark; they are received via individual cups in the trays. USED GLASSES are placed in the basket located near the ramp. GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE, please indicate to the server that you require this.

## LAMB OF GOD

**■** Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of

God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have

mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the

sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

**COMMUNION HYMNS: ELW #330    *Seed That in Earth is Dying***

- 1    Seed that in earth is dying  
      grows into ears of grain.  
      Grapes that are crushed in the vessel  
      turn into golden wine.  
      God, through this mystery grant us  
      faith in our deepest darkness,  
      life in our night and death.
- 2    We were baptized in Jesus,  
      into his death and grave,  
      to resurrection's promise:  
      praise and eternal life.  
      Heaven's own praises begin here  
      where you yourself are near us,  
      deep in our night and death.
- 3    Seed that in earth is dying  
      rises to bear much fruit.  
      Christ, as we meet at your table,  
      give us the bread of life.  
      Lord, we do thank and adore you!  
      Unceasing praise of the ages  
      rises from night and death.



**ELW #343    *My Song is Love Unknown***

- 1    My song is love unknown,  
     my Savior's love to me,  
     love to the loveless shown  
     that they might lovely be.  
     Oh, who am I that for my sake  
     my Lord should take frail flesh and die?
- 2    He came from his blest throne  
     salvation to bestow;  
     the world that was his own  
     would not its Savior know.  
     But, oh, my friend, my friend indeed,  
     who at my need his life did spend!
- 3    Sometimes we strew his way  
     and his sweet praises sing;  
     resounding all the day  
     hosannas to our king.  
     Then "Crucify!" is all our breath,  
     and for his death we thirst and cry.
- 4    We cry out; we will have  
     our dear Lord made away,  
     a murderer to save,  
     the prince of life to slay.  
     Yet cheerful he to suffering goes  
     that he his foes from thence might free.
- 5    In life no house, no home  
     my Lord on earth might have;  
     in death no friendly tomb  
     but what a stranger gave.  
     What may I say? Heav'n was his home  
     but mine the tomb wherein he lay.
- 6    Here might I stay and sing—  
     no story so divine!  
     Never was love, dear King,  
     never was grief like thine.  
     This is my friend, in whose sweet praise  
     I all my days could gladly spend!

Text: Samuel Crossman, 1624-1683, alt.

*When all have returned to their places, the assembly stands.*

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.  
**Amen.**

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Generous God,  
at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace.  
As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread,  
now make us one loaf to feed the world;  
in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.  
**Amen.**

### **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world*

### **INVITATIONS**

*Brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.*

### **BLESSING**

Beloved,  
we are God's own people,  
holy, washed, renewed.  
God bless you and keep you,  
shower you with mercy,  
fill you with courage,  
and ✠ give you peace.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN ELW #545*****Lord, Dismiss Us With Your Blessing***

- 1 Lord, dis - miss us with your bless-ing, fill our hearts with joy and peace;  
2 Thanks we give and ad - o - ra - tion for your gos - pel's joy - ful sound.  
3 Sav - ior, when your love shall call us from our strug - gling pil - grim way,



let us each, your love pos - sess-ing, tri - umph in re - deem-ing grace.  
May the fruits of your sal - va - tion in our hearts and lives a - bound.  
let no fear of death ap - pall us, glad your sum - mons to o - bey.



Oh, re - fresh us; oh, re - fresh us, trav - 'ling through this wil - der-ness.  
Ev - er faith-ful, ev - er faith-ful to your truth may we be found.  
May we ev - er, may we ev - er reign with you in end-less day.

Text: attr. John Fawcett, 1740–1817, sts. 1–2, alt.; Godfrey Thring, 1823–1903, st. 3, alt.

Music: SICILIAN MARINERS, Sicilian, 18th cent.

*Children join the pastors to send us in mission*

**DISMISSAL**

*Children: Go in peace. Share your bread.*

**Thanks be to God!**

**POSTLUDE**

*Fughette in D*

Rheinberger

## **Worship Leaders**

	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>
Acolyte	Luke Ridley	Joey Rodeck
Lector	Paul Conover	Phil Hahn
Prayer Assistant	Jorunn Scheiderich	
Communion Assistants	Erin Schmidgall Chris Schmidgall	Phil Hahn
Ushers	Don MacMillan Chuck Schaefer	
Sound/Light	Lance Nolting	Jeff Peiffer
Video/Livestream	-----	
Pastors	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Director of Music Ministries	Brian Bartusch	
Worship Participants	Lena Gibson, cantor Sanctuary Choir Logan Albright, accompanist	
Communion Baker	Bull Family	



<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.  
<sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:23-24

## COMMEMORATIONS

Week of March 17, 2024

### **March 17**

#### **Patrick, bishop, missionary to Ireland, died 461**

A native of Britain, Patrick was kidnapped by pirates at age sixteen and sold into slavery in Ireland. After a few years, he escaped, returned home, and entered the ministry. Returning to Ireland, he successfully served as a bishop and missionary there.

### **March 19**

#### **Joseph, Guardian of Jesus**

Though the Bible tells us little about the husband of Jesus' mother Mary, we know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. He is also shown as being devoted both to God and to Mary and Jesus. It is assumed that he died before Jesus became an adult.

### **March 21**

#### **Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, died 1556**

Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains (in revised form) the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

### **March 22**

#### **Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, died 1758**

A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God's love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University

## **Ecumenical Prayer Cycle**

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.**

### **We are thankful for:**

- preservation of the distinct cultural practices, literature, music and natural resources in these countries.
- the faithful witness of Christians during times of persecution and for those who survived times of occupation.
- how these countries peacefully became independent after 1918 and 1991.
- new-found freedoms that the people here have experienced, that they might be used for the good of all

### **We pray for:**

- peaceful relations with Russia and among all the ethnic groups in these lands.
- the healing of old wounds remaining from 20th century struggles.
- just economic development that benefits all citizens in these countries, and for those who live and work abroad.
- governmental leaders and all people, that they might together strive for justice, peace and the well-being of all

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

*“Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” – John 12:24*

Jesus speaks about his coming death and outlines what it means to truly follow him. Like Jesus, we are called to put aside self-interest for the sake of the gospel and serve God and neighbor willingly.

## Called Where Jesus Goes

It isn't only the first disciples who become uncomfortable when Jesus talked about his approaching death. We often do as well. Perhaps focusing on the crucifixion seems gruesome. Perhaps it conjures in us the (false) story of a divine parent who cannot forgive without punishing someone, with Jesus standing in as that one. Maybe it feels like a morbid emphasis on sin.

Jesus did not understand himself as the victim of divine punishment. He entered into suffering as a part of his glorification, working with—not against—his Father. He knows that human life has become twisted under the powers of sin and death so that if we grasp onto our “life in this world,” we will miss God’s gracious intention for us. Christ’s judgment of sin is not for our exclusion. Jesus never seeks to shame us, but condemns sin in order to deliver us from its power.

Perhaps, however, we shy away from talk of Christ’s death because we sense, on some level, that if our Lord must go to the cross, then so too must we. Jesus declares, “Whoever serves me must follow me.” Discipleship is a summons to die to ourselves and lose our life on this world’s terms. Paradoxically, this cruciform journey is the road to true fruitfulness and flourishing. It begins in our baptism and is nourished at the Lord’s table. It is sustained by the fellowship of faith, where together we hear the life-giving word of Jesus. It will find completion on the day of resurrection.

Our souls long for this way of salvation. Deep within us all, a voice whispers, “We wish to see Jesus.” God knows this need, so Jesus is lifted up to drive out the powers of sin and death. God’s unending mercy is displayed. For the same reason, we come together so that in hearing the word and sharing the eucharistic meal, and in our prayers, laments, and praises, Jesus may be lifted up to draw us, and all people, to salvation.

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Portions from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* by Steven Shakespeare.