



**Christ  
Lutheran**  
CHURCH

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**February 18, 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.**

*On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.*

## **GATHERING**

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

### **PRELUDE**

*My Song is Love Unknown*

Vaughan Williams

### **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!**

# KYRIE

**☐** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **☐** For the

**☑** Lord, have mer - cy.

peace from a - bove, and for our sal - va - tion, let us pray to the Lord.

**☐** For the peace of the whole

**☑** Lord, have mer - cy.

world, for the well - be - ing of the church of God, and for the u - ni - ty of

all, let us pray to the Lord. **☐** For this ho - ly

**☑** Lord, have mer - cy.

house, and for all who of - fer here their wor - ship and praise, let us

pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy. A - men

Help, save, com - fort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.

A - men

Help, save, com - fort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.

A - men

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

God of trackless desert,  
 whose Son walked untamed  
 in league with beasts and spirits,  
 whose kingdom is not distant  
 but breaking in among us:  
 give us time and space  
 to find a new identity  
 to let go of control  
 and walk the pilgrim way:  
 through Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation.

**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: Genesis 9:8-17**

*Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.*

<sup>8</sup>God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup>God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup>When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM: Psalm 25:1–10

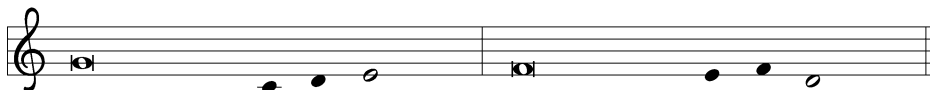
*The congregation is invited to sing the psalm refrain when indicated (R). Verses will be chanted alternately by the leader and the people.*

### Refrain



Your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithful-ness.

### Psalm Tone



- <sup>1</sup>To | you, O LORD,  
I lift | up my soul.
- <sup>2</sup>**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.**
- <sup>3</sup>Let none who look to you be | put to shame;  
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.
- <sup>4</sup>**Show me your | ways, O LORD,  
and teach | me your paths. R**
- <sup>5</sup>Lead me in your | truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
in you have I trusted all | the day long.
- <sup>6</sup>**Remember, O LORD, your compas- | sion and love,  
for they are from | everlasting.**
- <sup>7</sup>Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;  
remember me according to your steadfast love  
and for the sake of your good- | ness, O LORD.
- <sup>8</sup>**You are gracious and up- | right, O LORD;  
therefore you teach sinners | in your way. R**
- <sup>9</sup>You lead the low- | ly in justice  
and teach the low- | ly your way.
- <sup>10</sup>**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast | love and faithfulness  
to those who keep your covenant and your | testimonies. R**



## READING: 1 Peter 3:18-22

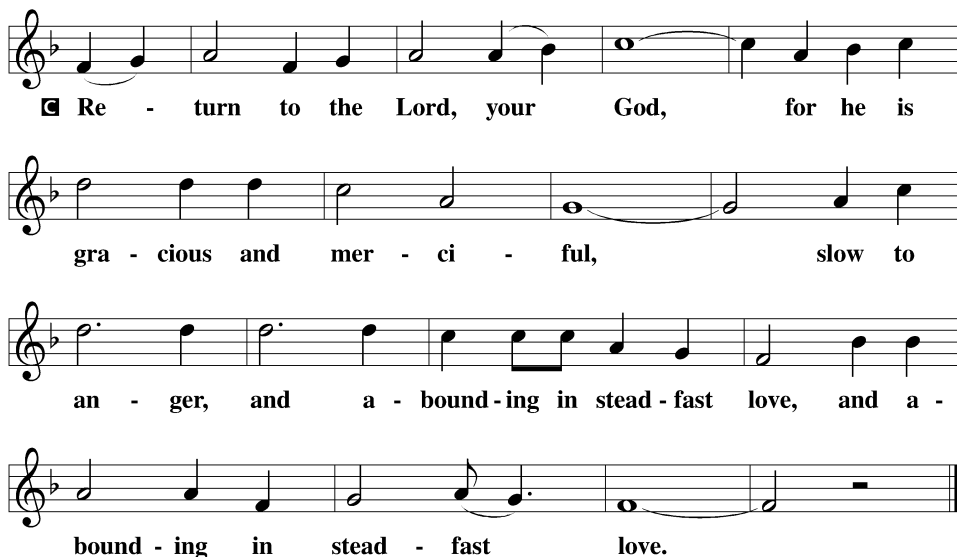
*As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.*

<sup>18</sup> Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup> in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

*The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.*



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is  
gra - cious and mer - ci - ful, slow to  
an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love, and a -  
bound - ing in stead - fast love.

## **HOLY GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-15**

*The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God's reign.*

The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

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      ELW #517      *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word*

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

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line.

1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in your word; curb those who  
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, your pow'r make known, for you are  
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, send peace and

by de - ceit or sword would wrest the king - dom from your Son  
Lord of lords a - lone; de - fend your ho - ly church, that we  
u - ni - ty on earth; sup - port us in our fi - nal strife

and bring to naught all he has done.  
may sing your praise e - ter - nal - ly.  
and lead us out of death to life.

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.  
Music: ERHALT UNS, HERR, J. Klug, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1543

## 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 our truth, the ark of your church has room for many expressions of faith. We give thanks for voices that challenge and awaken your people, especially that of Martin Luther, renewer of the church, whom we commemorate today. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God our maker, you remember your covenant with the earth and its inhabitants. Rescue communities and creatures hurting from natural disasters. Preserve species and habitats endangered by human carelessness and disregard. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God our light, you know our weakness. Free all who govern from the temptations of power. Sustain all who work for human rights in every nation, from large international organizations to courageous individuals taking a stand. Bless your churches in France, Germany, and Monaco; use them to call their neighbors to justice, mercy, and love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God our help, you care for your beloved children. Comfort all who are grieving, ill, afraid, in pain, or in despair. Feed hungry people living in food deserts. Protect any at risk from exploitation and abuse. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God our home, you gather your people. Grant us health and safety as we assemble. Keep us mindful of any who are homebound, hospitalized, convalescing, or traveling.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God our hope, you promise eternal life to your beloved children. We remember with gratitude those who have lived and died in faith, especially Polycarp. Grant that we may also dwell with you in everlasting peace. 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.**

## 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 Hilltop House [www.hilltophouse.org](http://www.hilltophouse.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](http://our CLC app) (download at [clcvalpo.org/app](http://clcvalpo.org/app)).*



## OFFERTORY

*Savior, When in Dust to You*

Manz

## 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.**

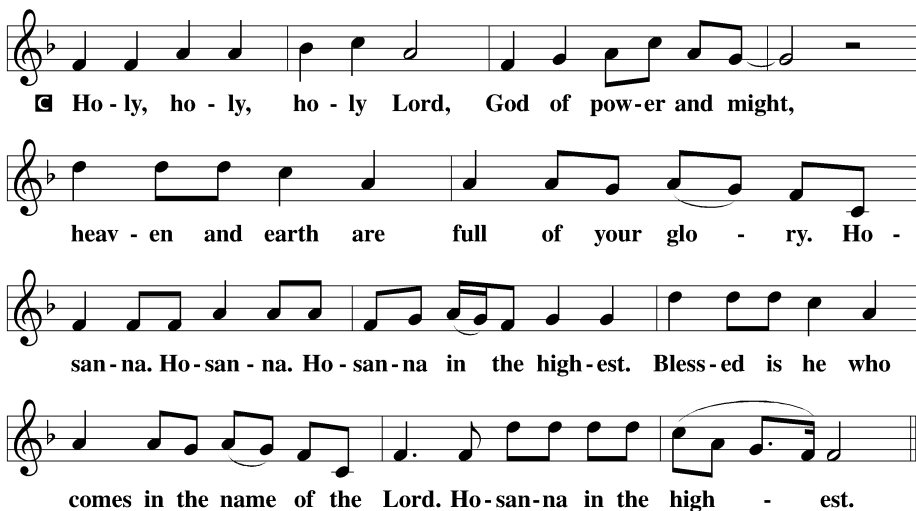
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**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: ACS #1012

*To You All Hearts Are Open (sung 4x)*



To you all hearts are o - pen, to



you all de - sires known. To you there are no



se - crets, al - might - y God; we come to you.

Text: John Tirro, b. 1966; based on an 11th cent. collect, tr. *Book of Common Prayer*

Music: ALL HEARTS ARE OPEN, John Tirro

Text and music © 2003 Mondo Zen Music, admin. Carol Vincent and Associates, LLC. All rights reserved.

ELW #613 *Thy Holy Wings*



1 Thy ho - ly wings, O Sav - ior, spread gent - ly o - ver me,  
2 Oh, let me nes - tle near thee, with - in thy down - y breast  
3 Oh, wash me in the wa - ters of No - ah's cleans - ing flood.



and let me rest se - cure - ly through good and ill in thee.  
where I will find sweet com - fort and peace with - in thy nest.  
Give me a will - ing spir - it, a heart both clean and good.



Oh, be my strength and por - tion, my rock and hid - ing place,  
Oh, close thy wings a - round me and keep me safe - ly there,  
Oh, take in - to thy keep - ing thy chil - dren great and small,



and let my ev - 'ry mo - ment be lived with - in thy grace.  
for I am but a new - born and need thy ten - der care.  
and while we sweet - ly slum - ber, en - fold us one and all.

Text: Carolina Sandell Berg, 1832–1903, sts. 1, 3; Gracia Grindal, b. 1943, st. 2; tr. composite

Music: BRED DINA VIDA VINGAR, Swedish folk tune

Text © 1983 Gracia Grindal, admin. Selah Publishing Co., Inc., agent.

*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 #319

*O Lord, throughout These Forty Days*

1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you  
 2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your  
 3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and  
 4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and

prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance  
 faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your  
 fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -  
 all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal

for our sin, and free us from our past.  
 skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.  
 ny our - selves that we may know God's love.  
 Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838-1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930  
 Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816; arr. Theodore A. Beck, 1929-2003  
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.  
 Arr. © 1969 Concordia Publishing House.

**DISMISSAL**

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

**Thanks be to God!**

**POSTLUDE**

*Pavanne*

Chambonnières

**Worship Leaders**

	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>
Acolyte	Luke Ridley	Portia Novak
Lector	Ruthie Ridley	Sara Long
Prayer Assistant	Darla Hernandez	Jeri Simms
Communion Assistants	Erin Schmidgall Chris Schmidgall	Holly Knauff Sara Long
Ushers	Irene Adams Kathy Sutherland	
Sound/Light	Zach Wehner	
Video/Livestream	-----	Tony Reinhold
Pastors	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Director of Music Ministries	Brian Bartusch	
Worship Participants	Melissa Summerville, cantor	
Communion Baker	Marilyn McGawn	

**COMMEMORATIONS**  
Week of February 18, 2024

**February 18**

**Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546**

On this day in 1546, Martin Luther died at the age of sixty-two. For a time, he was an Augustinian monk, but it is his work as a biblical scholar, translator of the Bible, public confessor of the faith, reformer of the liturgy, theologian, educator, and father of German vernacular literature that holds him in our remembrance. In Luther's own judgment, the greatest of all of his works was his catechism, written to instruct people in the basics of faith. And it was his baptism that sustained him in his trials as a reformer.

**February 23**

**Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156**

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna (in present-day western Turkey) and a link between the apostolic age and the church at the end of the second century. He is said to have been known by John, the author of Revelation. In turn he was known by Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in France, and Ignatius of Antioch. At the age of eighty-six he was martyred for his faith. When urged to save his life and renounce his faith, Polycarp replied, "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" The magistrate who made the offer was reluctant to kill a gentle old man, but he had no choice. Polycarp was burned at the stake, his death a testimony to the cost of renouncing temptation.

## **Ecumenical Prayer Cycle**

This week we pray for the churches and people of **France, Germany, Monaco.**

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

- the rich historic and cultural legacies that have come to the world from these lands.
- Franco-German friendship, reconciliation and cooperation that has emerged since the hostilities of the second world war
- how churches and governments in France and Germany have welcomed new immigrants
- the generosity in supporting ecumenical, interfaith and development work in the world

### **We pray for:**

- overcoming fears and suspicions that still remain from 20<sup>th</sup> century atrocities, and more recent terrorist attacks
- churches and governments to effectively counter anti-immigrant populist sentiments in these countries so that they truly will become more multi-ethnic
- economic decisions that are accountable to those who are most vulnerable and not only to those making a profit
- election of political leaders who will further the common good not only for their country but for the sake of Europe and the rest of world

### ***Stewardship Snippet***

*“All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.” – Psalm 25:10*

God’s commandments and Jesus’ teachings are not optional for Christians; they are given for the purpose of our growth in Christ. In turn we share Christ’s love with our neighbors and steward carefully all of God’s good gifts.

## How Beloved You Are!

Jesus' journey to the cross and resurrection begins with his baptism. As the church journeys with Jesus through Lent and toward Easter, we each remember our own baptism, and our life in Christ is renewed.

At the Jordan River, God stops at nothing to declare Jesus beloved. Not even the sky can cloud the message; God tears open the heavens and proclaims it loud and clear. Now each time we dip our hands into the font or trace the sign of the cross over our bodies, we remember this promise anew: "You are a beloved child of God." Nothing can separate you from God's love.

Immediately after baptism, Jesus must contend with Satan and wild beasts in the wilderness. Then, before Jesus' ministry begins, John is arrested. The Gospel of Mark doesn't give the fact more than a passing mention at this point in the story, but John's arrest and subsequent death make for a trauma that comes at a crucial moment in Jesus' life. How was Jesus able to begin his ministry after all he had been through? And how are we, who have experienced temptation, torment, or trauma, to journey on?

The journey is not easy for Jesus, and neither will it be for us. But it's amazing what is possible when you know just how beloved you are. How long must the voice of God have echoed in Jesus' mind after that baptism day! Perhaps the angels whispered in his ear as they waited on him: "You are beloved. With you God is well pleased." Every Sunday, we return to the waters because we can never have too many reminders. When times get tough, we can trust in the promises of God made to us in baptism. This is a flood that saves us. These waters bring new life out of death. God's love will stop at nothing. Today, remember just how beloved you are!

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