



**Christ
Lutheran**
CHURCH

2610 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, Indiana 46385
(219) 462-6660 • clcvalpo.org



**Time after Pentecost
July 26, 2026**

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 of 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.

As Solomon prays for wisdom, we seek to more deeply know the treasures of faith. In today's gospel Jesus offers everyday images that reveal to us the reign of God: a tree that becomes a sheltering home, yeast that penetrates and expands, a treasured pearl, a net that gains a great catch. Even as we seek the riches of God's reign, the great surprise is that God's grace finds us first!

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Prelude & Fugue in C Major

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,
whose compassion endures forever.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin to God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate God,
we confess to you all our sins.
Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves.
In your mercy, call us back to you.
Your yoke is easy and your burden is light.
Restore us to dwell in your peace.
In Christ's name we pray,
Amen.

Jesus says, "Come to me,
all you who are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest."
In the name of God,
Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,
your sins are forgiven.
Rest in God's love.
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.

GATHERING HYMN ELW #532

Gather Us In



1 Here in this place the new light is stream-ing, now is the dark - ness
 2 We are the young, our lives are a mys - t'ry, we are the old who
 3 Here we will take the wine and the wa - ter, here we will take the
 4 Not in the dark of build-ings con - fin - ing, not in some heav - en,



van - ished a - way; see in this space our fears and our dream-ings
 yearn for your face; we have been sung through - out all of his - t'ry,
 bread of new birth, here you shall call your sons and your daugh-ters,
 light years a - way— here in this place the new light is shin - ing,



brought here to you in the light of this day.
 called to be light to the whole hu - man race.
 call us a - new to be salt for the earth.
 now is the king - dom, and now is the day.



Gath-er us in, the lost and for - sak - en, gath-er us in, the
 Gath-er us in, the rich and the haugh-ty, gath-er us in, the
 Give us to drink the wine of com-pas - sion, give us to eat the
 Gath-er us in and hold us for - ev - er, gath-er us in and



blind and the lame; call to us now, and we shall a - wak - en,
 proud and the strong; give us a heart, so meek and so low - ly,
 bread that is you; nour-ish us well, and teach us to fash - ion
 make us your own; gath-er us in, all peo - ples to - geth - er,



we shall a - rise at the sound of our name.
 give us the cour - age to en - ter the song.
 lives that are ho - ly and hearts that are true.
 fire . . of love in our flesh and our bone.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A silence is kept before the prayer.

Scandalous God,
sowing weeds among the crop,
raising bread with impure yeast,
offering treasure beyond price,
casting a net that catches good and bad:
throw down our mean idols
of purity and possession
and let the Son of man
show us your inclusive,
provocative,
wide-branching love;
through Jesus Christ, the stumbling block.
Amen.

The assembly is seated.

WORD

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

CHILDREN'S TIME

Children are invited for a time together.

READING: Genesis 29:15-28

Laban deceives Jacob by giving his older daughter, Leah, to Jacob in marriage instead of the promised younger daughter, Rachel. Because of his love for Rachel, Jacob agrees to work for Laban for an additional seven years so that he may also be married to her.

¹⁵ Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was graceful and beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” ¹⁹ Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.” ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.” ²² So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast.

²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) ²⁵ When

morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?”²⁶ Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn.²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.”²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM 105:1-11, 45b

¹ Give thanks to the LORD and call upon God’s name;
make known the deeds of the LORD among the peoples.

² **Sing to the LORD, sing praises,
and speak of all God’s marvelous works.**

³ Glory in God’s holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

⁴ **Search for the strength of the LORD;
continually seek God’s face.**

⁵ Remember the marvels God has done,
the wonders and the judgments of God’s mouth,

⁶ **O offspring of Abraham, God’s servant,
O children of Jacob, God’s chosen ones.**

⁷ The LORD is our God,
whose judgments prevail in all the world,
⁸ **who has always been mindful of the covenant,
the promise made for a thousand generations:**

⁹ the covenant made with Abraham,
the oath sworn to Isaac,

¹⁰ **which God established as a statute for Jacob,
an everlasting covenant for Israel,**

¹¹ saying, “To you will I give the land of Canaan
to be your allotted inheritance.”^{45b} Hallelujah!

READING: Romans 8:26-39

These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

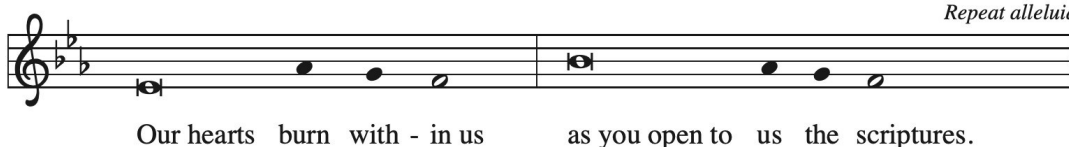
³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.



GOSPEL: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you O Lord.

³¹ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

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 #793

Be Thou My Vision

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



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
 4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
 Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
 thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
 great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

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

Our prayers draw on the Ecumencial Prayer Cycle and the Church's calendar of Commemorations—further information is found each week at the end of the bulletin.

Trusting in God's steadfast love for all God has made, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

God our wisdom and our song, we pray for bishops, candidacy committees, those preparing for seminary, those awaiting call as deacons or pastors, and all who seek to lead your disciples in any way. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God our breath and our heartbeat, help us to recognize signs of your presence among us. Protect and support diverse ecosystems, from national parks to family farms, from ranches to wild places. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God our peace and our guide, help civic leaders hear all their peoples' stories with compassion and curiosity, and remind us of your love from which we can never be separated. Attend to the needs of the lands, people, and churches of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda with your healing and provision.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

God our intercessor and our lawgiver, dismantle the barriers to care and recognition of all who live with chronic illness, mobility struggles, pain, and uncertainty. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

God our redeemer, may we trust your love above and beyond all else that distracts, annoys, frightens, exhausts, or divides us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God who seeks, finds, and saves, for our community's part in the ongoing gift of creation, and for the riches of faith and hope which came before, we give you thanks.

We are especially grateful today for the faith and witness of Johann Sebastian Bach, Heinrich Schütz, George Fredrick Handel, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Olaf.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Grateful for your abundant provision and trusting in your goodness, we cast all our cares upon you, through the abundant grace of Christ Jesus.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*We invite those worshiping 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 offerings of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with **Food Bank of Northwest Indiana** foodbanknwi.org and **Project Neighbors** projectneighbors.org or facebook.com/ProjectNeighbors.*

If you wish to give electronically, use the QR code or browse to our secure on-line portal at clcvalpo.org/give.



OFFERTORY

Voluntary in D

Selby

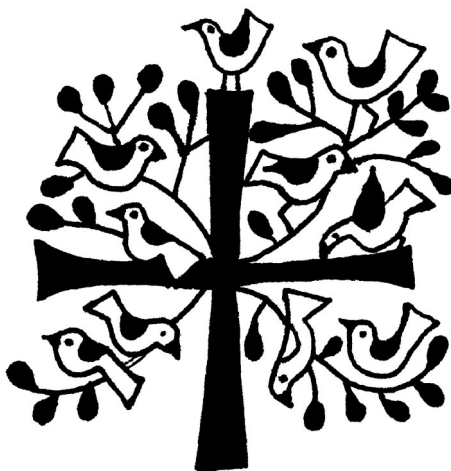
The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

OFFERING PRAYER

Loving God,
we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts.
**Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love,
so that all creation can taste your abundance.**
**We ask this in the name of Jesus,
through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.**
Amen.

THE 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.



The pastor begins the prayer and all join in singing:

SANCTUS

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

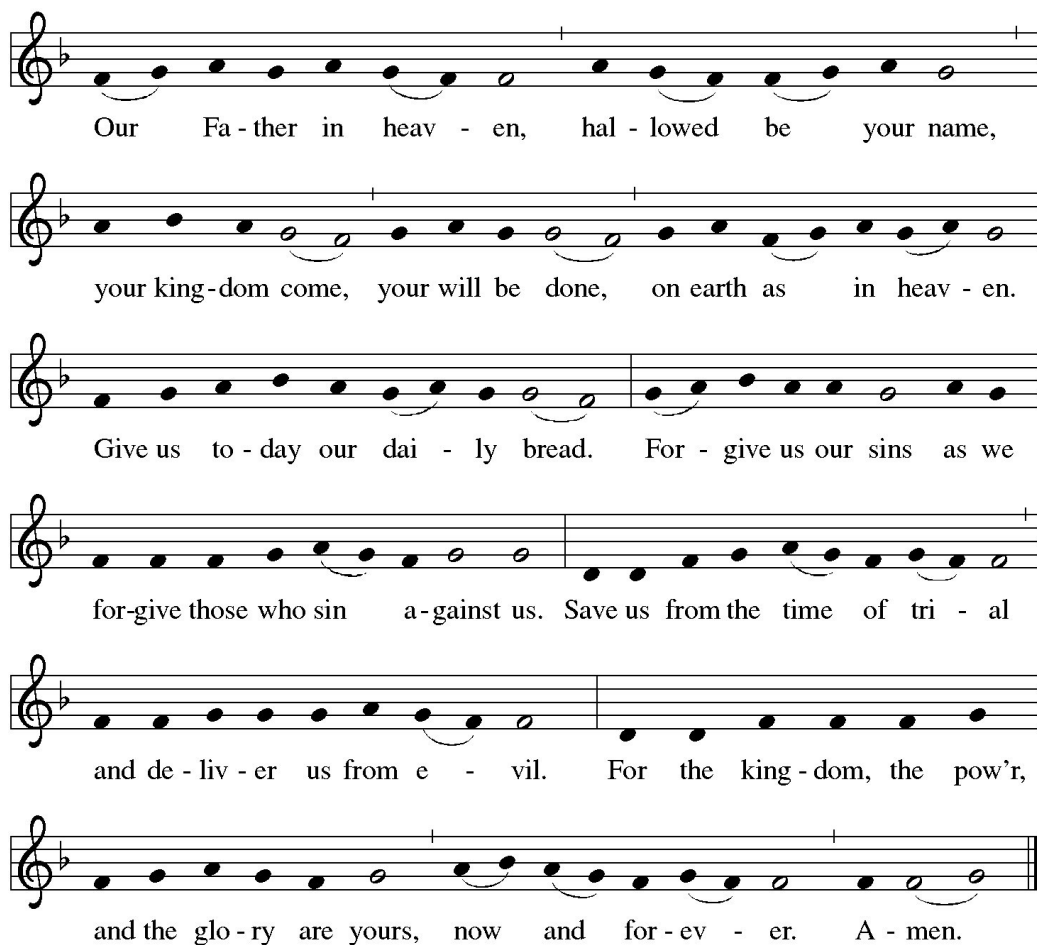


Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and
God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the
Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

TABLE PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

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



Our Fa - ther in heav - en, hal - lowed be your name,
your king-dom come, your will be done, on earth as in heav - en.
Give us to - day our dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins as we
for-give those who sin a - gainst us. Save us from the time of tri - al
and de - liv - er us from e - vil. For the king - dom, the pow'r,
and the glo - ry are yours, now and for - ev - er. A - men.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Heaven has come near.
Come, share in the feast!
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

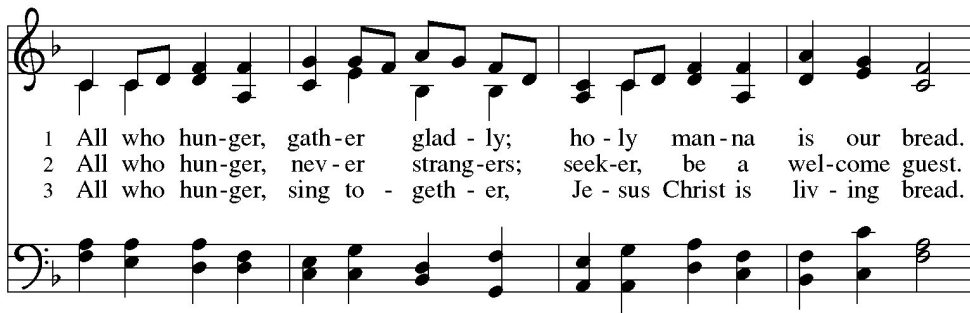
ELW #814 *Take, Oh, Take Me As I Am (sung 4x in harmony)*

The image displays a musical score for the hymn 'Take, Oh, Take Me As I Am'. It is written for a four-part harmony, consisting of two staves for the soprano and alto voices, and two staves for the tenor and bass voices. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: 'Take, oh, take me as I am; sum-mon out what I shall be; set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.' The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a focus on the lyrics. The first line of music covers the first two staves, and the second line covers the next two staves. The score ends with a double bar line.

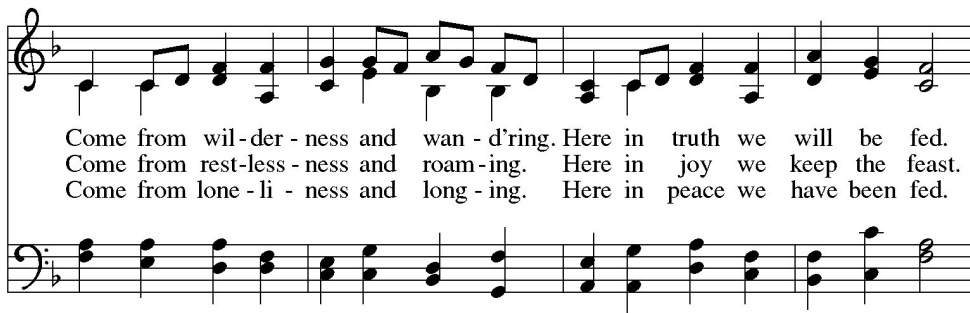
Take, oh, take me as I am; sum-mon out what I shall be;

set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.

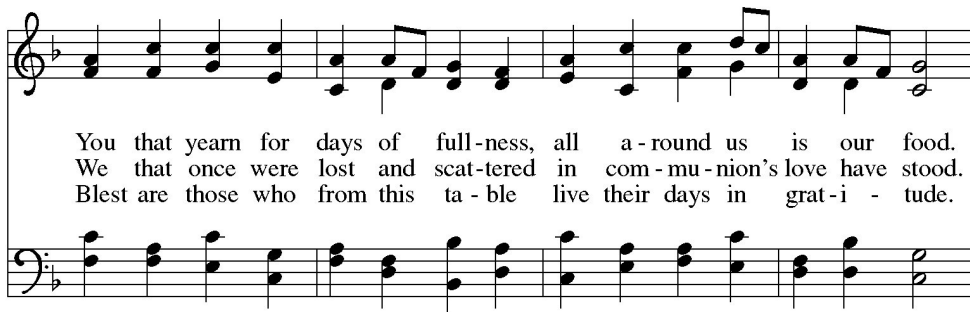
ELW #461 *All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly*



1 All who hun-ger, gath-er glad - ly; ho - ly man - na is our bread.
 2 All who hun-ger, nev - er strang-ers; seek-er, be a wel-come guest.
 3 All who hun-ger, sing to - geth - er, Je - sus Christ is liv - ing bread.



Come from wil-der - ness and wan - d'ring. Here in truth we will be fed.
 Come from rest-less - ness and roam - ing. Here in joy we keep the feast.
 Come from lone - li - ness and long - ing. Here in peace we have been fed.



You that yearn for days of full-ness, all a - round us is our food.
 We that once were lost and scat-tered in com - mu - nion's love have stood.
 Blest are those who from this ta - ble live their days in grat-i - tude.



Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.
 Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.
 Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.

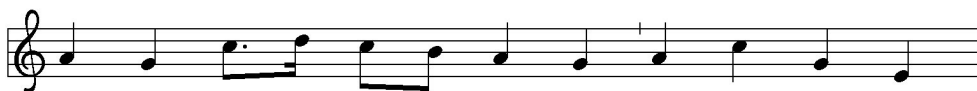
ELW #499 *O Lord, We Praise You*



1 O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and a - dore you, in thanks -
 2 Your ho - ly bod - y in - to death was giv - en, life to
 3 Lord God, be - stow on us your grace and fa - vor, that we



giv - ing bow be - fore you. Here with your
 win for us in heav - en. No great - er
 fol - low Christ our Sav - ior and live to -



bod - y and your blood you nour - ish our weak souls that
 love than this to you could bind us; may this feast of
 geth - er here in love and u - nion, nor re - pent this



they may flour - ish. O Lord, have mer - cy!
 that re - mind us! O Lord, have mer - cy!
 blest com - mu - nion. O Lord, have mer - cy!



May your bod - y, Lord, born of Mar - y, that our
 Lord, your kind - ness so much did move you that your
 Let not your good Spir - it for - sake us; by this



sins and sor - rows did car - ry, and your blood for us plead
 blood now moves us to love you. All our debt you have paid;
 ho - ly ban - quet re - make us. Give your church, Lord, to see



in all tri - al, fear, and need: O Lord, have mer - cy!
 peace with God once more is made. O Lord, have mer - cy!
 days of peace and u - ni - ty. O Lord, have mer - cy!

After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands as the minister continues.

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Compassionate God,
through the gifts of bread and wine
our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love.
Strengthen us that we,
may share your love freely, as you have shared with us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

The assembly is seated as brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

BLESSING

God, who creates, redeems and sustains,
bless, heal, and hold you
today and always.
Amen.



1 In thee is glad-ness a-mid all sad-ness, Je-sus, sun-shine of my
2 Je-sus is ours! . . We fear no pow-ers, not of earth or sin or



heart. By thee are giv-en the gifts of heav-en, thou the
death. He sees and bless-es in worst dis-tress-es; he can



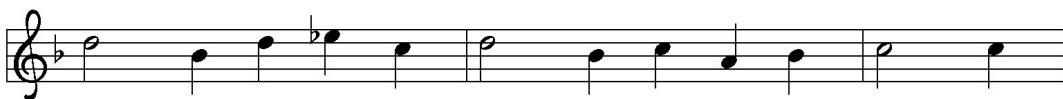
true re-deem-er art. Our souls thou wak-est; our bonds thou
change them with a breath. Where-fore the sto-ry tell of his



break-est. Who trusts thee sure-ly has built se-cure-ly
glo-ry with heart and voic-es; all heav'n re-joic-es



and stands for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia! Our hearts are
in him for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia! We shout for



pin-ing to see thy shin-ing, dy-ing or liv-ing,
glad-ness, tri-umph o'er sad-ness, love him and praise him



to thee are cleav-ing; naught can us sev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!
and still shall raise him glad hymns for-ev-er: Al-le-lu-ia!

SENDING HYMN ELW #867***In Thee is Gladness***

*Children
pastors to
mission.*

*Children:
share the
Thanks be*

Toccata in

Worship Leaders

9:30 a.m.

Acolyte

Reid Venstrom

Lector

Crystal Koss

Prayer Assistant

Robin Nelson

Communion Assistants

Erin Schmidgall
Chris Schmidgall
Darla Hernandez

Ushers

Gregg Copeland
Vickie Copeland

Sound/Light

Video/Livestream

Sam Venstrom

Pastors

Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr.
Rev. Erica Gibson-Even

Director of Music Ministries

Brian Bartusch

Communion Baker

Candace Jacques

*join the
send us in*

DISMISSAL
*Go in peace,
good news!*
to God.

POSTLUDE

10

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda.**

We are thankful for:

- the abundant natural resources in the DRC and the mountainous beauty of Rwanda
- those who have worked for healing and reconciliation in Rwanda, especially after the genocide
- the tireless efforts of churches and community organizations, working with the support of humanitarian organizations, to improve the living conditions of the people

We pray for:

- an end to poverty and hunger, and improved access to health services, especially for the young, that they might have hope for their future
- an end to rebel movements across borders and the political instability this stirs up
- just economic development that does not exploit Creation and people
- democratic election of less corrupt governments that work for the sake of all.

COMMEMORATIONS

Week of July 26, 2026

July 28

Johann Sebastian Bach, died 1750; Heinrich Schütz, died 1672; George Frederick Handel, died 1759; musicians

These three German-born musicians have done much to enrich the life of the church. Schütz was an early master who focused on settings of biblical texts. Bach wrote over 300 cantatas along with works for organ and instrumental pieces, and has been called the “fifth evangelist” for the way he proclaimed the gospel in music. Handel’s great work, *Messiah*, is a setting of scriptural texts.

July 29

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany

Friends of Jesus, Mary and Martha are remembered for the hospitality of their home that they offered him—Martha focused on serving their guest, and Mary on listening to him. Their brother Lazarus was raised from the dead as a sign of the greater resurrection to come.

July 29

Olaf, King of Norway, martyr, died 1030

Considered the patron saint of Norway, Olaf went from a life of piracy to becoming Christian and declaring himself king of Norway. He revised the laws and tried to administer them fairly. Driven from Norway in a rebellion, he was killed in battle trying to regain his kingdom.

It's the Small Things

Children like to collect things: rocks, sticks, and more. Adults tend to pretend-love the items that are brought to them: “Oh, how beautiful!” “Oh, that’s a good one.” Children, encouraged, continue their collections, finding the smallest of things and displaying them like they are the most valuable items in the world.

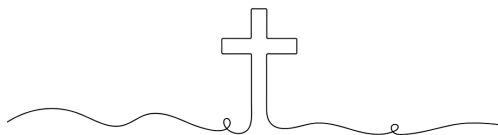
Jesus’ parables in today’s gospel reading teach the disciples about things that are so small they are often overlooked: a mustard seed, a little bit of yeast, a tiny pearl, and even a net that is quite small until it is filled with fish. These little things in his parables are treasures important for understanding the reign of God.

Adults tend to overlook the small things while seeking larger things, heavier things, shinier things. We walk right past the tiny flower in the crack of a sidewalk, which once would have caught our eye. One pearl? A full necklace is better. A shrub that provides creatures a home? It’s now in an inconvenient place.

But Jesus teaches that in God’s reign all things, large and small, matter. All people matter. It is a wise disciple who recognizes this. Even King Solomon, with all his wealth, prayed for wisdom. Wisdom helps us see more clearly and begin to understand the depth of God’s grace.

And that grace Jesus displayed immediately. “Have you understood all this?” he asked. The disciples answered simply, “Yes” (Matthew 13:51). What a bold answer! They were too worried to admit they did not understand. A little yeast, though, goes a long way. Jesus knew this. Each parable would build on another until the disciples understood the entire collection.

For us today, understanding God’s grace takes study, prayers for wisdom, and walking the path while looking for the small things that matter. The reign of God is like a rose among a bramble bush? A child’s picture of their home? However you visualize it, it is a treasure to cherish and to share.



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