



Christ Lutheran CHURCH

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



Season of Epiphany
February 12, 2023

WELCOME TO CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH!

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

At Christ Lutheran people of all backgrounds and experiences gather to worship because we all share a common 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. If you have a prayer request, the yellow cards in the seatback holders have a place for them; 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.

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.

COVID Procedure Update

Masks are encouraged but optional during worship. Naturally if you prefer to stay masked throughout the service, you are of course welcome to do so. Masks are not required for singing but suggested.

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.

In today's reading from Deuteronomy we are called to choose life by loving and obeying God. Much of today's gospel reading echoes portions of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' instructions to the crowd reveal a pattern of behavior that honors both God and the neighbor, resulting in life and health for the whole community. We too are invited to embrace these commandments, not out of fear of retribution, but because God has promised that to do so means life for us.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Impromptu No. 4

Schubert

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 (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 makes all things new,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,
**we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,
and cannot free ourselves.
We have not practiced your righteousness.
Our hearts have turned away from you.
For the sake of the world you so love,
forgive us,
that we may be reconciled to one another
for the glory of your holy name.
Amen.**

Thus says our God:
“The former things have come to pass
and new things I now declare.”
God’s mercy makes us new.
We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.
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.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God’s peo-ple on earth.



Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al- might-y God and Fa-ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.



Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,



you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us;



you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re-ceive our prayer.



For you a-lone are the Ho - ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



you a-lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it,



in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Living One,
in whose freedom
creation was born as gift:
free us from the need
to possess, define and silence others
that we might rejoice
in the strangeness of our beauty
revealed in flesh and blood;
through Jesus Christ, our reconciliation.
Amen.

WORD

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

When children read, they may read a version that is appropriate to their reading level and voice, which may vary from the printed texts.

CHILDREN'S TIME

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

READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

The LORD sets before the people of God a clear choice. Life and prosperity will come to the faithful; loss of the land will be the consequence of disobedience. Choosing life entails loving and holding fast to the Lord. Life in God's presence presupposes the promise made to the ancestors.

[Moses said to the people:] ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death

and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

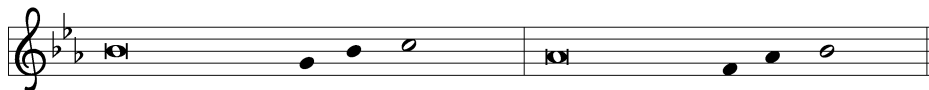
PSALM 119:1-8

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



- ¹ Happy are they whose | way is blameless,
 who follow the teaching | of the LORD!
- ² **Happy are they who observe | your decrees**
 and seek you with | all their hearts,
- ³ who never do | any wrong,
 but always walk | in your ways.
- ⁴ **You laid down | your commandments,**
 that we should | fully keep them. R
- ⁵ Oh, that my ways were made | so direct
 that I might | keep your statutes!

⁶ **Then I should not be** | **put to shame,**
when I regard all | **your commandments.**
⁷ I will thank you with | a true heart,
 when I have learned your | righteous judgments.
⁸ **I will** | **keep your statutes;**
do not utter- | **ly forsake me. R**

READING: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Human leaders in the church are not the ones who control ministry. Rather they are coworkers who belong to God, the one who truly controls and continuously empowers the ministry of the church.

¹Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? ⁴For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human?

⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?



You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

HOLY GOSPEL 5:21-37

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts his followers to embrace standards of righteousness that exceed legal requirements and traditional expectations.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

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 #804

Come Down, O Love Divine

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

1 Come down, O Love di - vine; seek thou this soul of mine
 2 Oh, let it free - ly burn, till world - ly pas - sions turn
 3 Let ho - ly char - i - ty mine out - ward ves - ture be,
 4 And so the year - ing strong, with which the soul will long,

and vis - it it with thine own ar - dor glow - ing;
 to dust and ash - es in its heat con - sum - ing;
 and low - li - ness be - come mine in - ner cloth - ing—
 shall far out - pass the pow'r of hu - man tell - ing;

O Com - fort - er, draw near; with - in my heart ap - pear
 and let thy glo - rious light shine ev - er on my sight,
 true low - li - ness of heart, which takes the hum - bler part,
 no soul can guess Love's grace till it be - come the place

and kin - dle it, thy ho - ly flame be - stow - ing.
 and clothe me round, the while my path il - lum - ing.
 and o'er its own short - com - ings weeps with loath - ing.
 where - in the Ho - ly Spir - it makes a dwell - ing.

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

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.
A brief silence.

Inspire your church that it may be a sign of life throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all find abundant life in your ways. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Nourish your creation. Accompany all who plant and water. Bless the work of farmers; provide for subsistence farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward sustainable ways to feed the world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible, empower peacemakers with your Spirit. Bless the people and churches of Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland; prosper the work of international cooperation and global relief organizations. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, disaster, and hunger, equip relief workers to bring hope – especially in Turkey and Syria in earthquake recovery. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Nurture all in need. Bring healing to all who experience trauma caused by systems of injustice and destructive relationships. Give courage to those struggling to repent and those seeking reconciliation. Sustain all who work for restoration. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Encourage this congregation. Call us to a common purpose and keep us from quarrelling. Turn our hearts toward you and guide our leaders, so that our choices may be life-giving for all. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Thanks be to you for the lives of all who have died in Christ, including Cyril, Methodius, and Martin Luther. Teach us to follow them in your ways and gather us with them into the promise of eternal life with you. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

Amen.

COMMISSIONING OF STEPHEN MINISTERS

The assembly is seated.

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

*Throughout this pandemic our congregation has never stopped serving our neighbors, our community, our world -- all because of your participation and support. This month we are sharing a portion of our offerings for the support of **First Contact** firstcontactinc.org and the **Christ Lutheran Mike Steiner Benevolence Fund**.*

If you prefer to give electronically use [our CLC app](#) or browse to our secure on-line portal at clcvalpo.org/give.

OFFERTORY

Voluntary Air for Organ

Long

OFFERING PRAYER

The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

Liberating God,

**you break the bonds of injustice
and let the oppressed go free.**

**Receive these offerings in thanksgiving
for all your works of merciful power,
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.
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.

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 he.")

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
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, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come and taste the joy of God!

Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION

The assembly is seated.

***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.*

*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 #496

One Bread, One Body



One bread, one bod-y, one Lord of all; one cup of



bles-sing which we bless, and we, though man-y



through-out the earth, we are one bod - y in this one Lord.



- 1 Gen - tile or Jew, ser - vant or free,
- 2 Man - y the gifts, man - y the works,
- 3 Grain for the fields, scat - tered and grown,



wom - an or man, no more.
 one in the Lord of all.
 gath - ered to one for all.

Refrain

Text: John Foley, sr, b. 1939

Music: ONE BREAD, ONE BODY, John Foley, sr

Text and music © 1978 John B. Foley, SJ and OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

ELW #612 *Healer of Our Every Ill*



Heal - er of our ev - 'ry ill, light of each to - mor - row,



give us peace be - yond our fear, and hope be - yond our sor - row.



- 1 You who know our fears and sad - ness, grace us with your
- 2 In the pain and joy be - hold - ing how your grace is
- 3 Give us strength to love each oth - er, ev - 'ry sis - ter,
- 4 You who know each thought and feel - ing, teach us all your



peace and glad - ness; Spir - it of all com - fort, fill our hearts.
still un - fold - ing, give us all your vi - sion, God of love.
ev - 'ry broth - er; Spir - it of all kind - ness, be our guide.
way of heal - ing; Spir - it of com - pas - sion, fill each heart.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL, Marty Haugen

Text and music © 1987 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.

All rights reserved. Used by permission.

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

Holy One,
we thank you for the healing
that springs forth abundantly from this table.
Renew our strength to do justice,
love kindness,
and journey humbly with you.
Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

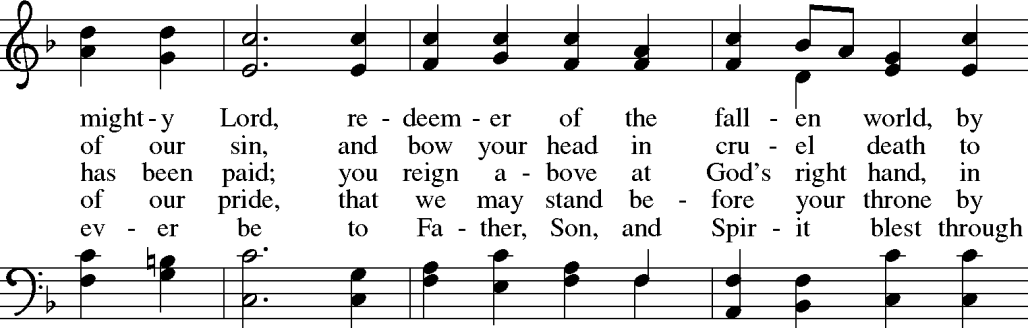
Brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

BLESSING

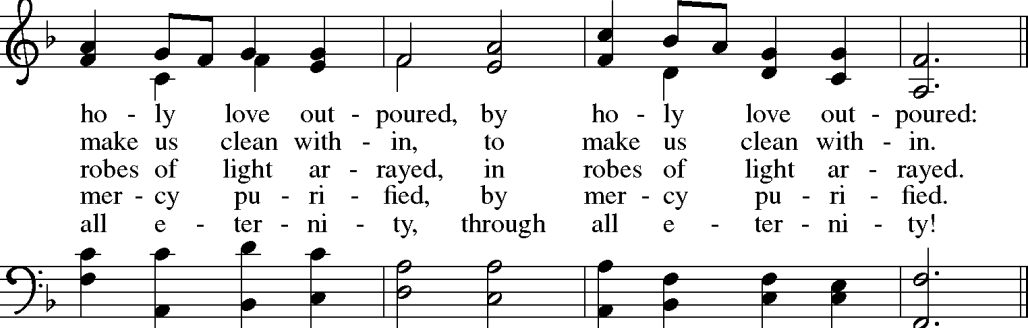
The God who faithfully brings forth justice
and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.
Amen.



1 O Christ, our hope, our hearts' de - sire, cre - a - tion's
 2 How vast your mer - cy to ac - cept the bur - den
 3 But now the bonds of death are burst, the ran - som
 4 Oh, let your might - y love pre - vail to purge us
 5 All praise to you, as - cend - ed Lord; all glo - ry



might - y Lord, re - deem - er of the fall - en world, by
 of our sin, and bow your head in cru - el death to
 has been paid; you reign a - bove at God's right hand, in
 of our pride, that we may stand be - fore your throne by
 ev - er be to Fa - ther, Son, and Spir - it blest through



ho - ly love out - poured, by ho - ly love out - poured:
 make us clean with - in, to make us clean with - in.
 robes of light ar - rayed, in robes of light ar - rayed.
 mer - cy pu - ri - fied, by mer - cy pu - ri - fied.
 all e - ter - ni - ty, through all e - ter - ni - ty!

Text: Latin hymn, c. 8th cent.; tr. John Chandler, 1806–1876, adapt.
 Music: LOBT GOTT, IHR CHRISTEN, Nikolaus Herman, 1480–1561

Children join the pastors to send us in mission.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Follow Jesus.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Toccata in Seven

Rutter

As worship concludes we move to the Gathering Place, where we are invited to greet one another and share in fellowship.

Worship Leaders

	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>
Acolyte	Sara McDaniel	Joey Rodeck
Lector	Jorunn Scheiderich	Becky Fry
Prayer Assistant	Sue McPherson	Becky Fry
Communion Assistants	Andrew Teeple Barb Clements	Amy Knauff Jacquie Chevalier
Ushers	Luke Venstrom Tim Sutherland	Jerry Bohacik
Sound/Light	Lance Nolting	Jeff Peiffer
Video/Livestream	-----	
Welcome Center		
Pastors:	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Director of Music Ministries:	Brian Bartusch	
Worship Participants	Magdalena Gibson-Even, piano Karen Hernes, cantor (10:30 am)	

February Altar Gifts

Communion Baker:	Linda Mapes
Communion Wine:	To the Glory of God
Altar Candles:	Vickie and Gregg Copeland ~ In Honor of Grandchildren
Eternal Lamp Candles:	To the Glory of God

Today, as a congregation, we Commission five new Stephen Ministers. They are Kathy Page, Becky Fry, Nikki Soleim, Vickie Copeland and Paula Katsahnias. They have completed their training and will now become part of our total of 17 Stephen Ministers, helping members and community people experiencing some of life's difficulties. Contact any Stephen Minister or one of our Pastors for more information.

COMMEMORATIONS
Week of February 12, 2023

February 14

Cyril, monk, died 869; Methodius, bishop, died 885; missionaries to the Slavs

These two brothers from a noble family in Thessalonika in northeastern Greece were priests and missionaries. After some early initial missionary work by Cyril among the Arabs, the brothers retired to a monastery. They were later sent to work among the Slavs, the missionary work for which they are most known. Since Slavonic had no written form at the time, the brothers established a written language with the Greek alphabet as its basis. They translated the scriptures and the liturgy using this Cyrillic alphabet. The Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, and Bulgars regard the brothers as the founders of Slavic literature. The brothers' work in preaching and worshiping in the language of the people are honored by Christians in both East and West.

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.

Stewardship Snippet

Deuteronomy 30:17 –I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days.

We are saved by our faith through God's grace. Because of this we are free to live fully, loving God with everything we have and loving neighbor as ourselves. We choose life and God's blessings when we put Jesus at the center of our lives.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland.**

We give **thanks** for:

- the quality of life that many in these countries enjoy and their commitment to provide for those in the world who are in need
- the organizations located here that seek to increase ecumenical and interfaith understanding and work together for the common good of all people and creation
- political and economic transparency in these countries
- those who reach out to migrants and counter attitudes and practices that oppose them.

We **pray** for:

- environmental practices that preserve the natural environment, especially the Alps' melting glaciers
- the work for justice, reconciliation and peace pursued by the people and organizations here, seeking to shape globalization so that it benefits all
- religious freedom, also for those from non-Christian traditions
- overcoming the fear of, and welcoming the embrace of, those who are outsiders to the countries' historic, ethnic traditions.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

A New Community

Anyone who has ever lived or worked with other humans likely knows that community is messy. We hurt each other, sometimes intentionally but often by accident. We say things we regret. We stay silent when we should speak up, or we impose our own beliefs on others when we should start by listening instead. We act rashly out of fear or ignorance or exhaustion. We trample over one another in an attempt to achieve, to win, to earn, or to protect what we assume is rightfully ours.

Jesus knows this side of humanity, and today he invites us to imagine another way. Today's gospel sounds harsh to our ears, but it might actually be an invitation into a community that looks more like the kingdom of God: a community of radical inclusivity, compassion, and care for one another. In this type of community, no one can be simply thrown aside or left behind. Honesty and integrity are the foundation of communication. People are seen in their full, beloved humanity, not as objects to be consumed or cast aside for the sake of others.

In our world today, we might wonder if such a community is possible, but in worship, we get to practice living in a community of faith together every week. Through the reading of scripture, we are reminded of the larger story of God in which we find our meaning: a living story of love, grace, and mercy. We confess our sins before one another and receive forgiveness and a fresh start. We are given our identity as God's beloved through baptism, and we are fed with Christ's own body and united with one another in holy communion. It is Christ at work in us who makes true healing and reconciliation possible, both in our congregations and throughout the world.

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2023 Augsburg Fortress.

All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #26201. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Portions printed under OneLicense.net License #A-711129. Stewardship Toolkit, Copyright © 2021, Rev. Robert Blezard. Portions from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* by Steven Shakespeare. Stushie Art, used by permission.