

REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH
Serving Absecon - Galloway Township
Rev. Heidi Link – Pastor
Brian Conover - Music Director

Sunday, February 23rd, 2025
THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY / 10:00 AM

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, our creator, our protector, our wellspring of life.
Amen.

Trusting that God receives our words and the meditations of our hearts, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

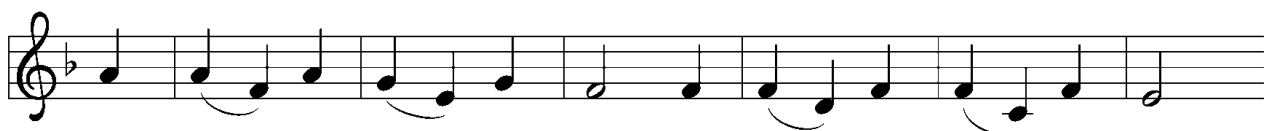
Merciful God,

you speak blessing and compassion into the world. Forgive us for the ways we act with judgment, cruelty, or indifference. We ignore the needs of our neighbors; we resist your call to oppose injustice; we give in to scarcity and fear; we assume the worst about one another. Cleanse us from our faults and release us from their grasp. Show us your lovingkindness. Restore our hearts and repair your world, that we may live in Christ's ways. Amen.

God proclaims these words of assurance: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine." In ✚ Christ, you are forgiven. In the Spirit, you are made free. Refreshed by the waters of mercy, live anew as beloved children of God. **Amen.**

*** OPENING SONG**

Blest Be the Tie That Binds



1 Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Chris-tian love;
2 Be - fore our Fa - ther's throne we pour our ar - dent prayers;
3 We share our mu - tual woes, our mu - tual bur - dens bear,
4 From sor - row, toil, and pain, and sin we shall be free;



the u - ni - ty of heart and mind is like to that a - bove.
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our com - forts and our cares.
and of - ten for each oth - er flows the sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.
and per - fect love and friend - ship reign through all e - ter - ni - ty.

* - Congregation Stands (If for any reason you are unable to stand during the service, please remain seated.)

* GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

Let us pray: O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

³ Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me; do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, since there are five more years of famine to come, so that you and your household and all that you have will not come to poverty.’

¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

¹ Do not be provoked by evildoers;

do not be jealous of those who do wrong.

² **For they shall soon wither like the grass,
and like the green grass fade away.**

³ Put your trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and find safe pasture.

⁴ **Take delight in the LORD,
who shall give you your heart’s desire.**

⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust in the LORD,
and see what God will do.

⁶ **The LORD will make your vindication as clear as the light
and the justice of your case like the noonday sun.**

⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently.

Do not be provoked by the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.

⁸ **Refrain from anger, leave rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads only to evil.**

⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD shall possess the land.

¹⁰ **In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will not be there.**

¹¹ But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.

³⁹ **But the deliverance of the righteous comes from you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in time of trouble.**

⁴⁰ You, O LORD, will help them and rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because in you they seek
refuge.

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING

Refrain: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! (Repeat)

**Oh, how right it is to give thanks to Him, our creator and our king;
We sing out our praise to the holy one; We rejoice, we rejoice in our God! (Repeat
Refrain)**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body. ⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the physical and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As one of dust, so are those who are of the dust, and as one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we will also bear the image of the one of heaven.

⁵⁰ What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

* SONG OF PRAISE

I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me



1 I'm so glad I'm so glad
2 Sa - tan had me bound, Je - sus lift - ed me. Sa - tan had me bound,
3 When I was in trou - ble, When I was in trou - ble,



Je - sus lift - ed me. I'm so glad
Sa - tan had me bound, Je - sus lift - ed me,
When I was in trou - ble,



sing - ing glo - ry, hal - le - lu - jah! Je - sus lift - ed me.

Text: African American spiritual
Music: JESUS LIFTED ME, African American spiritual

* **THE WORD OF GOD: Luke 6:27-38**

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke:

²⁷ “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ³⁷ “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

Build a Longer Table



1 Build a long - er ta - ble, not a high - er wall,
2 Build a saf - er ref - uge, not a larg - er jail;
3 Build a broad - er door - way, not a long - er fence.
4 When we lived as ex - iles, ref - u - gees a - broad,



feed - ing those who hun - ger, mak - ing room for all.
where the weak find shel - ter, mer - cy will not fail.
Love pro - tects all peo - ple, spar - ing no ex - pense.
Christ be - came our door - way to the reign of God.



Feast - ing to - geth - er, strang - er turns to friend,
For an - y place where jus - tice is de - nied,
When we em - brace com - pas - sion more than fear,
So must our ta - bles wel - come those who roam.



Christ breaks walls to piec - es; false di - vi - sions end.
Christ will breach the jail wall, free - ing all in - side.
Christ tears down our fenc - es: all are wel - come here.
None can be ex - clud - ed; all must find a home.

Text: David Bjorlin, b. 1984

Music: NOËL NOUVELET, French carol

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* APOSTLE'S CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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

*** PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

With the Spirit of Christ shining upon us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Surprising God, you call us to love our enemies and to show kindness in the face of cruelty. Let our actions be a shining witness of your overwhelming grace for all. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

As animals hibernate and fields lay dormant, let them be a reminder that life and faith are not static but always changing and growing. May we, with all creation, trust that the ending of one thing promises life in a new way. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for leaders and policymakers who work to reduce violence in our nations, cities, and towns. Give your wisdom and discernment amid heated arguments and differing viewpoints. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the victims of abuse and violence. Provide safe shelter and new beginnings to those experiencing domestic violence and dangerous situations. Enfold with love all who seek your healing care (*especially*). God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Empower our faith communities to be signs of your gracious love. Bless the local ministries of parish nursing and caregiving, that they will be a voice for those in need in our communities (*other ministries may be named*). God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the enduring witness of those who have died before us (*especially Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna*). May their lives in you provide a witness of your everlasting grace. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We entrust our prayers to you, O God, in the sure and certain hope that your promise is revealed among the people.

Amen.

*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING / SPECIAL MUSIC

* OFFERING SONG

As with Gladness Men of Old



1 As with glad - ness men of old did the guid - ing star be - hold;
2 As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - ior, to thy low - ly bed,
3 As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra - dle, rude and bare,



as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam - ing bright;
there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heav' n and earth a - dore;
so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,



so, most gra - cious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led by thee.
so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.
all our cost - liest trea - sures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav' n - ly king.

Text: William C. Dix, 1837–1898, alt.
Music: DIX, Conrad Kocher, 1786–1872

* OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray: God of grace, your love reaches to the heavens, and your abundance to the depths of the seas. Bless what we offer to your service: our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts. Let us overflow with gratitude and generosity, now and always. **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 him thanks and praise.

It is indeed right and salutary...*(Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the day or season, concluding:)* we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

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.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

With Thanksgiving, we remember that in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying: " Take and eat; this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me."

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.

*** THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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**

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Come, eat this meal of gladness.

We come.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

(BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS who believe that the risen Christ is present in the Eucharist to forgive sin and renew life are invited to either come to the altar area for communion as directed or share at your pew. If you come forward, you will receive the elements. If you choose to receive at your seat, please remain there, kneel as you are able, and receive the elements using the communion packets available from the ushers. If there are other special needs, please speak to an usher.)

*** POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

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

*** POST COMMUNION SONG**

O Lord, Now Let Your Servant



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n-ly peace,
for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:
a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill,
the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.

Text: Ernest E. Ryden, 1886–1981, alt., based on the Nunc dimittis
Music: KUORTANE, Finnish folk tune
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*** PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray: Nourishing God, at this table you have refreshed us with holy gifts of food and drink. Strengthen us for service, and send us out to embody your good news of liberation and healing for the sake of the world. In the name of Christ we pray, **Amen.**

*** BLESSING**

And now a blessing: The Spirit of the triune God ✚ bless you with joy, anoint you with compassion, and send you in love. **Amen.**

*** CELEBRATIONS!!!**

* **CLOSING SONG**

Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling



1 Soft - ly and ten - der - ly Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing for
2 Why should we tar - ry when Je - sus is plead - ing, plead - ing for
3 Oh, for the won - der - ful love he has prom - ised, prom - ised for



you and for me. See, on the por - tals he's wait - ing and watch - ing,
you and for me? Why should we lin - ger and heed not his mer - cies,
you and for me! Though we have sinned, he has mer - cy and par - don,

Refrain



watch - ing for you and for me.
mer - cies for you and for me? "Come home, come home!
par - don for you and for me.



You who are wea - ry, come home." Ear - nest - ly, ten - der - ly,



Je - sus is call - ing, call - ing, "O sin - ner, come home!"

Text: Will L. Thompson, 1847–1909
Music: THOMPSON, Will L. Thompson

* **SENDING**

Go in peace. Live in hope.
Thanks be to God.

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