

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

Sunday, March 23rd, 2025
THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT / 10:00 AM

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

Silence is kept for reflection.

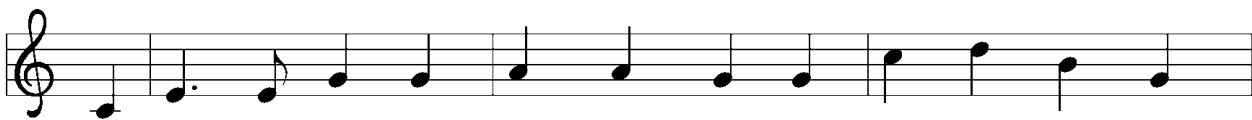
Compassionate One,

you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but our lives do not always reflect you and your love for the world. We do not show others the tender compassion you have shown to us. We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality you grant to all people. We oppress others, even though you have set us free again and again. We squander the abundant gifts of the earth. Transform our lives and guide us again in the way of the cross. Amen.

Beloved in Christ, God's arms are always stretched open wide to welcome the wandering ones home. In † Christ your sins are forgiven. You have a place in God's house forever. **Amen.**

*** OPENING SONG**

Eternal Father, Strong to Save



1 E - ter - nal Fa - ther, strong to save, whose arm has bound the
2 O Sav - ior, whose al - might - y word the winds and waves sub -
3 O Ho - ly Spir - it, who didst brood up - on the cha - os
4 O Trin - i - ty of love and pow'r, all trav - 'lers guard in



rest - less wave, who bade the might - y o - cean deep its
mis - sive heard, who walked up - on the foam - ing deep, and
dark and rude, and bid its an - gry tu - mult cease, and
dan - ger's hour from rock and tem - pest, fire and foe, pro -

... song continues ...

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



own ap - point - ed lim - its keep: oh, hear us when we
calm a - mid the storm didst sleep: oh, hear us when we
give, for wild con - fu - sion, peace: oh, hear us when we
tect them where - so - e'er they go; thus ev - er - more shall



cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.
cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.
cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.
rise to thee glad hymns and praise from land and sea.

Text: William Whiting, 1825–1878, alt.
Music: MELITA, John B. Dykes, 1823–1876

* 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: Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-9

Hear, everyone who thirsts;

come to the waters;

and you who have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread

and your earnings for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ Now you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake their way
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 63:1-8

¹ O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there
is no water.
² **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,
that I might behold your power and your glory.**
³ For your steadfast love is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.
⁴ **So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.**
⁵ My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,
⁶ **when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.**
⁷ For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
⁸ **My whole being clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

10 I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the
cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and
in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink.
For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was
Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck
down in the wilderness.
⁶ Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they
did. ⁷ Do not become idolaters as some of them did, as it is written, “The people sat
down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” ⁸ We must not engage in sexual
immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We
must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by
serpents. ¹⁰ And do not complain, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the
destroyer. ¹¹ These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were
written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² So if you think

you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. ¹³No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

LIGHTING OF THE “CROWN OF THORNS” WREATH (CANDLES 1, 2 & 3)

In the Exodus story, we read of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness and lifting up their complaints to God... of being hungry, of being thirsty, of feeling abandoned. If we are honest about our daily walk with God, we admit that we, too, are often like the Israelite. We too often lose faith in God’s goodness and in God’s providence. For the Israelites, God continued to provide for their needs... sending bread from heaven and making water spring forth from a rock.


In the same way, no matter what the wilderness may look like in our lives – a great loss that we are living through, a deep sadness that we are walking through, or unanswered questions that we are having to live with – God is faithful, God continues to provide for our needs and will never, ever abandon us.

Let us pray together:

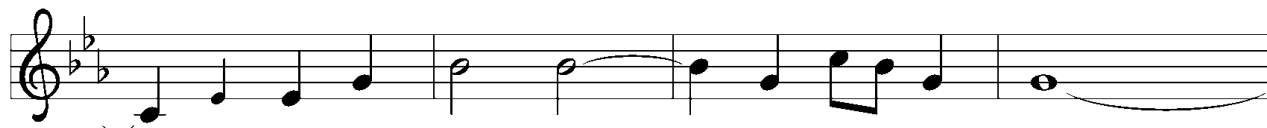
Heavenly Father, throughout these forty days, unseal within us the wellspring of your grace, cleanse our hearts of all that is not holy, and cause your gift of new life to flourish once again. Amen.

*** HYMN OF PRAISE**

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me



1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

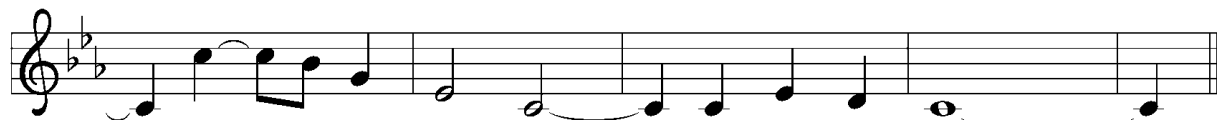


I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,

...song continues...



Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual
 Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual

*** THE WORD OF GOD: Luke 13:1-9**

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke:

13 At that very time there were some present who told Jesus^[a] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

When We Are Tested



1 When we are test - ed and wres - tle a - lone,
 2 When in the des - ert we cry for re - lief,
 3 When we are tempt - ed to bar - ter our souls,
 4 When we have strug - gled and searched through the night,



fam - ished for bread when the world of - fers stone,
 plead - ing for paths marked by cer - tain be - lief,
 trad - ing the truth for the pow'r to con - trol,
 sort - ing and sift - ing the wrong from the right,

...song continues...



nour - ish us, God, by your word and your way,
lift us to love you be - yond sign and test,
teach us to wor - ship and praise on - ly you,
Sav - ior, sur - round us with cir - cles of care,



food that sus - tains us by night and by day.
trust - ing your pres - ence, our on - ly true rest.
seek - ing your will in the work that we do.
an - gels of heal - ing, of hope, and of prayer.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

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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

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.
A brief silence.

We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to live. God, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.

(prayers continue...)

We pray for those in need, called to receive your compassion (*especially*). Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural disasters and human conflict (*especially*). Aid communities in coming together to mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens, clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and thirst. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the faithful lives of those who proclaimed your gospel in times of challenge and strife, and for all those whose lives of love and service have ended (*especially*). May their witness inspire our own. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life. **Amen.**

* SHARING OF THE PEACE

The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING / SPECIAL MUSIC

* OFFERING SONG

We lift our voi - ces; We lift our hands; We lift our
lives up to you, We are an of - fer-ring. Lord, use our voi - ces; Lord, use our
hands; Lord, use our lives they are yours, We are an of - fer-ring; We are an
of-fer-ring.

* OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray: Gracious Provider, you set your immense treasures among us, opening your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love, deepen our commitment to sharing those treasures with others, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. **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**

All who are hungry, come! The feast of grace is spread!

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.

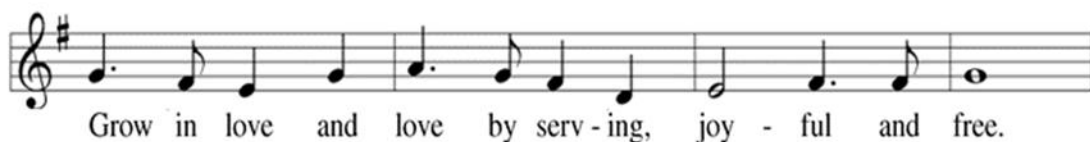
Amen

*** POST COMMUNION SONG**

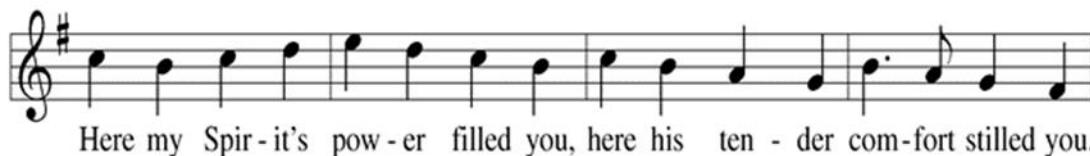
Go, My Children, with My Blessing



3 "Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour-ished, clos - er to me.



Grow in love and love by serv - ing, joy - ful and free.



Here my Spir - it's pow - er filled you, here his ten - der com - fort stilled you.



Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour-ished, joy - ful and free."

*** PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray: Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and made us new. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities, that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*** BLESSING**

And now a blessing: God our tender parent, God the crucified one, God the reconciling Spirit, ✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

*** CELEBRATIONS!!!**

*** CLOSING SONG**

God of Grace and God of Glory



1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
2 Lo! The hosts of e - vil round us scorn the Christ, as -
3 Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils



pour your pow'r; crown your an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;
sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us
your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,
we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion



bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.
for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.
lest we miss your king - dom's goal, lest we miss your king - dom's goal.
serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878–1969

Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1873–1932

*** SENDING**

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

Thanks be to God.

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