

Welcome to
Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Loving God, Serving Others

2nd Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2026



During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

GATHERING

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

Confession and Forgiveness

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

Amen.

Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt
and blots out all offenses. Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you:
Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word:
Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign,
and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition,
and for disdainng the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin,
and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world:
Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent,
and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life:
Gracious God,
have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

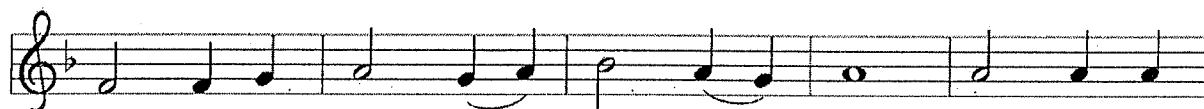
God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.
Through faith, the free gift of God,
you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.
The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead
dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts,
and gives you life and peace.

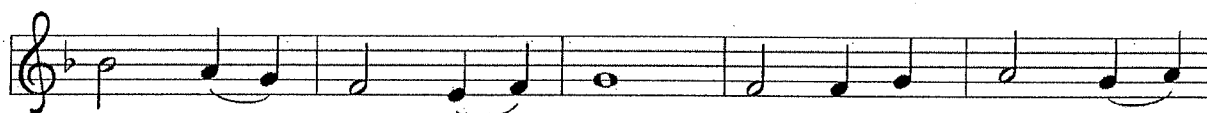
Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 803

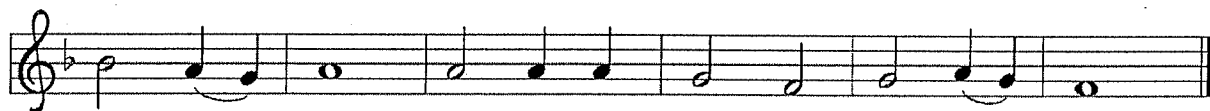
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross



1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross on which the
2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the
3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sor - row and
4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, that were a



prince of glo - ry died, my rich - est gain I
death of Christ, my God; all the vain things that
love flow min - gled down. Did e'er such love and
pres - ent far too small; love so a - maz - ing,

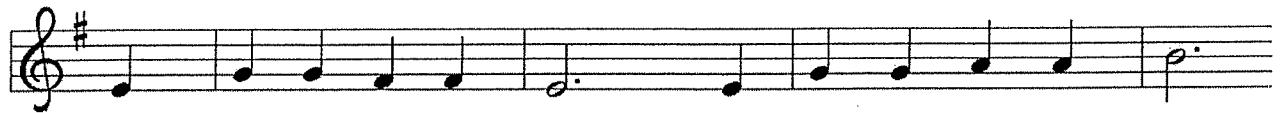


count but loss and pour con - tempt on all my pride.
charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood.
sor - row meet, or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?
so di - vine, de - mands my soul, my life, my all.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Music: HAMBURG, Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

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.



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

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

First Reading: Genesis 12:1-4a

God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose—that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey, they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.

¹ The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

^{4a} So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.

Psalm: Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills; my help comes from the LORD. (Ps. 121:1, 2)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills;

from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the LORD,**

the maker of heaven and earth.

³ The LORD will not let your foot be moved

nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, the keeper of Israel**

will neither slumber nor sleep;

⁵ the LORD watches over you;

the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ **the sun will not strike you by day,**

nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will preserve you from all evil

and will keep your life.

⁸ **The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in,**

from this time forth forevermore.

Second Reading: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises.

Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before

God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to

him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as

something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly,

such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his

descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the

adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For


the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is


written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

Word of God, Word of Life.
Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



We are turn - ing, Lord, to hear you; you are mer - ci - ful and kind -



slow to an - ger, rich in bless - ing, and with love to us in - clined.

The gospel according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: John 3:1-17

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

MESSAGE

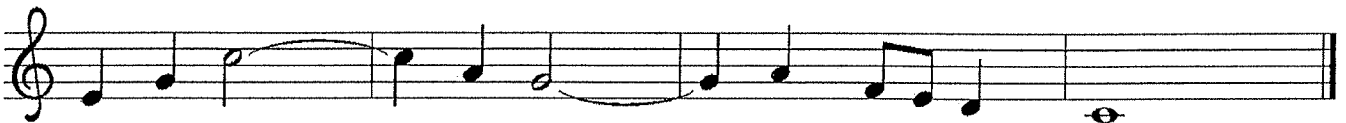
REV. BOB HANSEN

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 660

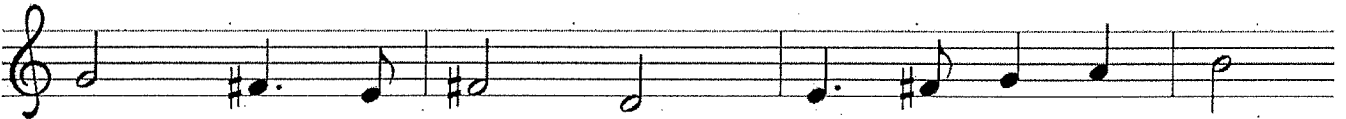
Lift High the Cross



Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim till

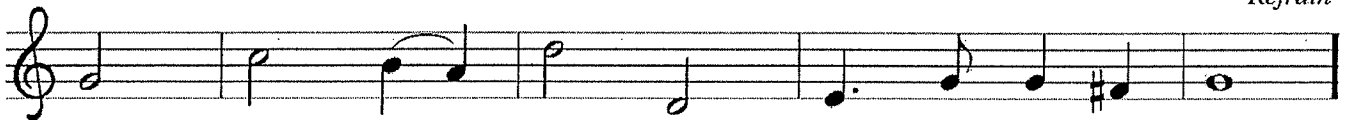


all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.



1 Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where our cap - tain trod,
2 All new - born ser - vants of the Cru - ci - fied
3 O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree,
4 So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be:

Refrain



our king vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.
bear on their brows the seal of him who died.
as thou hast prom - ised, draw us all to thee.
praise to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry!

Text: George W. Kitchin, 1827-1912; rev. Michael R. Newbolt, 1874-1956

Music: CRUCIFER, Sydney H. Nicholson, 1875-1947

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APOSTLES' CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**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;
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.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

Faithful One, you renew us by grace. As you have inspired faith through the work of church artists and hymnwriters throughout the ages, give your church the means to praise your beauty today. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Living One, you delight in this world. The sun and moon, the wind and the water declare your goodness. Preserve this earth, and protect conservationists, scientists, and all who labor in service to creation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Ruling One, you bless us to be a blessing. Open the hearts of all leaders to seek the flourishing of every person and lend your help to all who wait for justice, deliverance, and peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Compassionate One, you send your Son to save. Declare your word of acceptance to any who feel condemned and lift up any brought low by hatred and exclusion. Tend to all who are struggling with illness or loss. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Guiding One, you watch over our going out and coming in. Bless newcomers and new members in this assembly and accompany those who have recently left this community to journey elsewhere. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Eternal One, you neither slumber nor sleep. Be our keeper in life and in death. Thank you for our beloved who have died, and for your promise which saves this whole world by your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.
Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING PRAYER

O God, maker of heaven and earth,
your steadfast love embraces all creation.
You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth
and bring forth its bounty.
Through these gifts of bread and wine,
draw us into the death and life of your Son,
who calls us to bear witness to his saving work.
We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

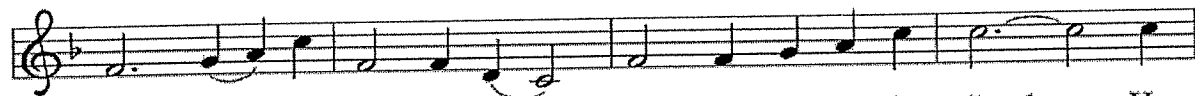
It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise.....we praise your name and join their unending hymn.



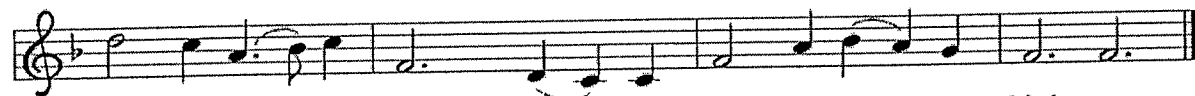
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Words of Institution

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.

Come among us.

Bless this meal.

May your Word take flesh in us.

Awaken your people.

Fill us with your light.

Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,
Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate,
Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

CONSECRATION OF COMMUNION

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.**

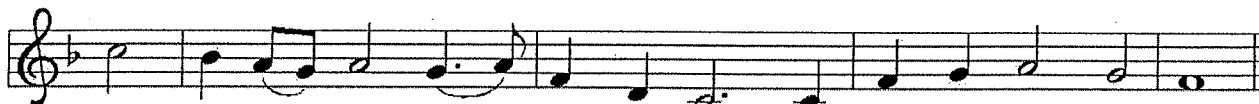
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the table.

Feast on God's goodness and mercy.



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of our salvation,

we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls,
reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey.

Through the body and blood of your Son,
may we become Christ's body in the world,
bearing witness to your love for all creation,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in his mission to the world.

BLESSING

Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:
God, who calls all things into existence,
Jesus Christ, who redeems us,
and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,
✠ bless you now and always.

Amen.

Blessed Assurance



- 1 Bless-ed as-sur-ance, Je-sus is mine! Oh, what a fore-taste of glo-ry di-vine!
- 2 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, per-fect de-light, vi-sions of rap-ture now burst on my sight;
- 3 Per-fect sub-mis-sion, all is at rest; I in my Sav-ior am hap-py and blest,

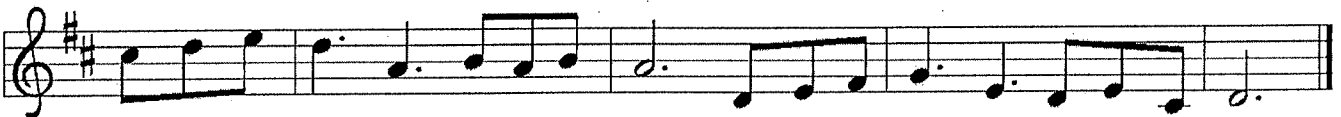


Heir of sal-va-tion, pur-chase of God, born of his Spir-it, washed in his blood.
an-gels de-scend-ing bring from a-bove ech-oes of mer-cy, whis-pers of love.
watch-ing and wait-ing, look-ing a-bove, filled with his good-ness, lost in his love.

Refrain



This is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long:



this is my sto-ry, this is my song, prais-ing my Sav-ior all the day long.

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820–1915

Music: ASSURANCE, Phoebe P. Knapp, 1830–1908

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Believe in the good news.

Thanks be to God.

**Presiding today:
Rev. Bob Hansen
Michael Graddy - Musician
Lynn Hansen - Reader**

OFFICE HOURS/CONTACT INFORMATION:

***Monday - Thursday; 8 am - 1 pm
Phone: 815-758-3203
Website: bethlehemdekalb.org
E-mail: belcdekalb@comcast.net
Facebook: bethlehemdekalb***

Annual Meeting Part II will be held on March 22nd following worship.

Midweek Lenten Services

Salem Lutheran Church - Wednesday at 7 pm

**First Lutheran Church
Soup Supper at 5:30 pm
Lenten Service at 6:30 pm**

Pretzels and Lent

At first glance, a pretzel seems simple – just twisted dough, baked until golden. But behind this familiar shape lies a story deeply rooted in Christian faith, prayer and the spirit of Lent.

A Shape Full of Meaning

The pretzel's three holes are often said to symbolize the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – making it a quiet yet powerful teaching tool. More than decoration, the shape itself was a visual reminder of devotion, humility and attentiveness to God.

In this way, the pretzel became a physical expression of prayer: hands folded, body still, heart turned toward heaven.

A Lenten Food

Because of its simple ingredients and lack of indulgence, the pretzel became closely associated with Lent. It embodied the season's call to restraint, reflection, and return to what is essential. In some parts of Europe, pretzels were eaten specifically during Lent and Holy Week. They reminded believers that fasting is not about deprivation for its own sake, but about creating space – space for prayer, repentance, and renewed reliance on God.

A Small Reminder with a Deep Message

The pretzel's story invites us to notice how faith can be embedded in ordinary things. What began as a simple Lenten bread became a symbol of prayer, discipline and trust in God's provision. As we journey through Lent, the pretzel reminds us that holiness is often found not in extravagance, but in simplicity – and that even the smallest things can point our hearts back to God. Sometimes, all it takes is folded arms, simple bread, and a willing heart.