Welcome to

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Loving God, Serving Others

19th Sunday in Pentecost

October 4, 2026

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

GATHERING

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

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
who pours love into our hearts
and healing upon the earth.
Amen.

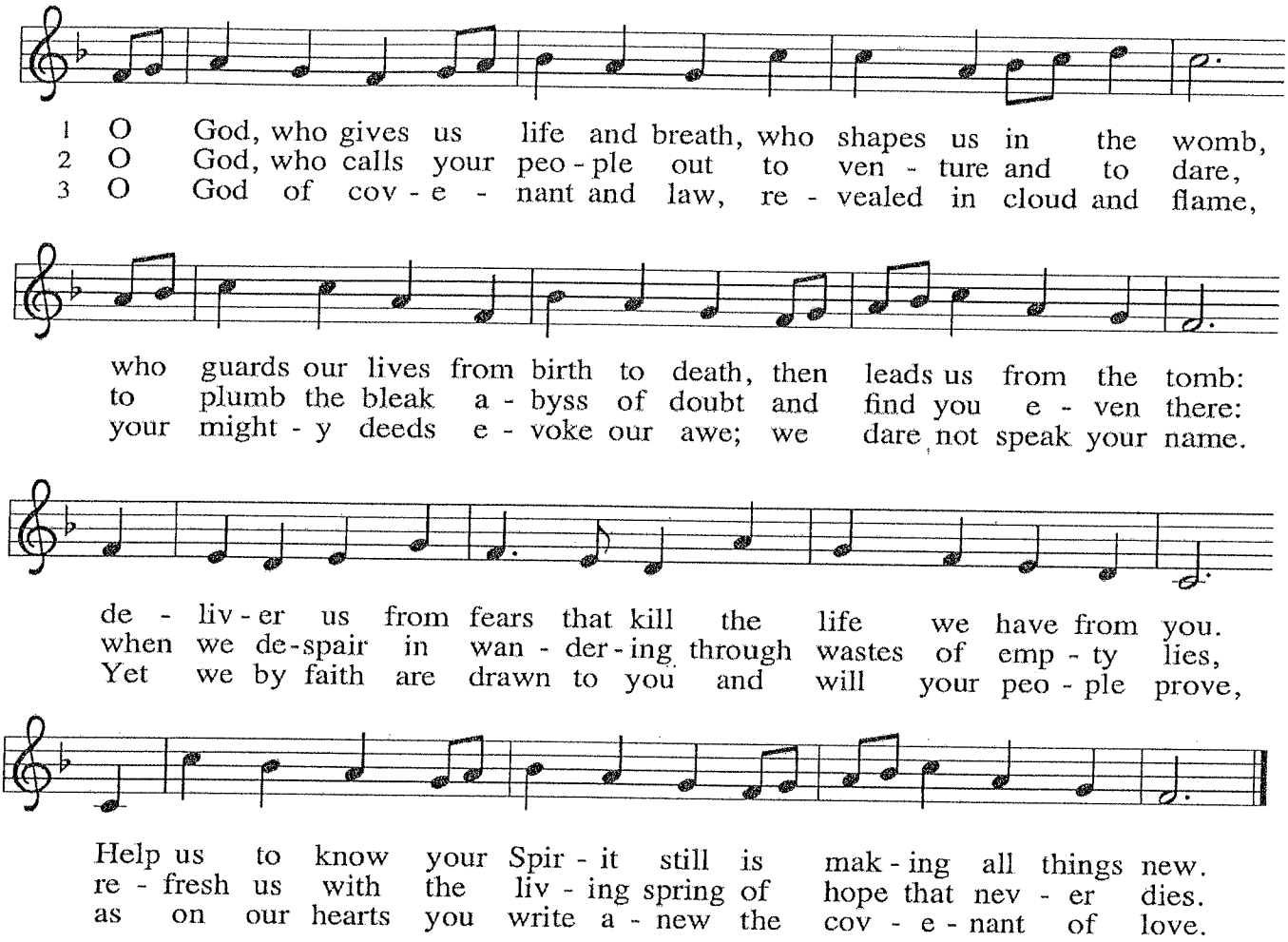
Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for brief reflection.

Compassionate God,
we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness
in the world and in our own hearts.
Creation groans from overuse.
Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships.
Indifference keeps us from seeking justice.
Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love
to others.
Turn our hearts back to you.
Restore our world and reconcile us to one another.
Renew us to live as your holy people,
following the way of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Hear this good news:
We have peace with God through ☩ Jesus Christ,
in whom there is no condemnation,
but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.
Receive freely this healing gift of grace.
Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ACS 1086

O God, Who Gives Us Life

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944
Music: NOEL, English melody; arr. Arthur S. Sullivan, 1842–1900
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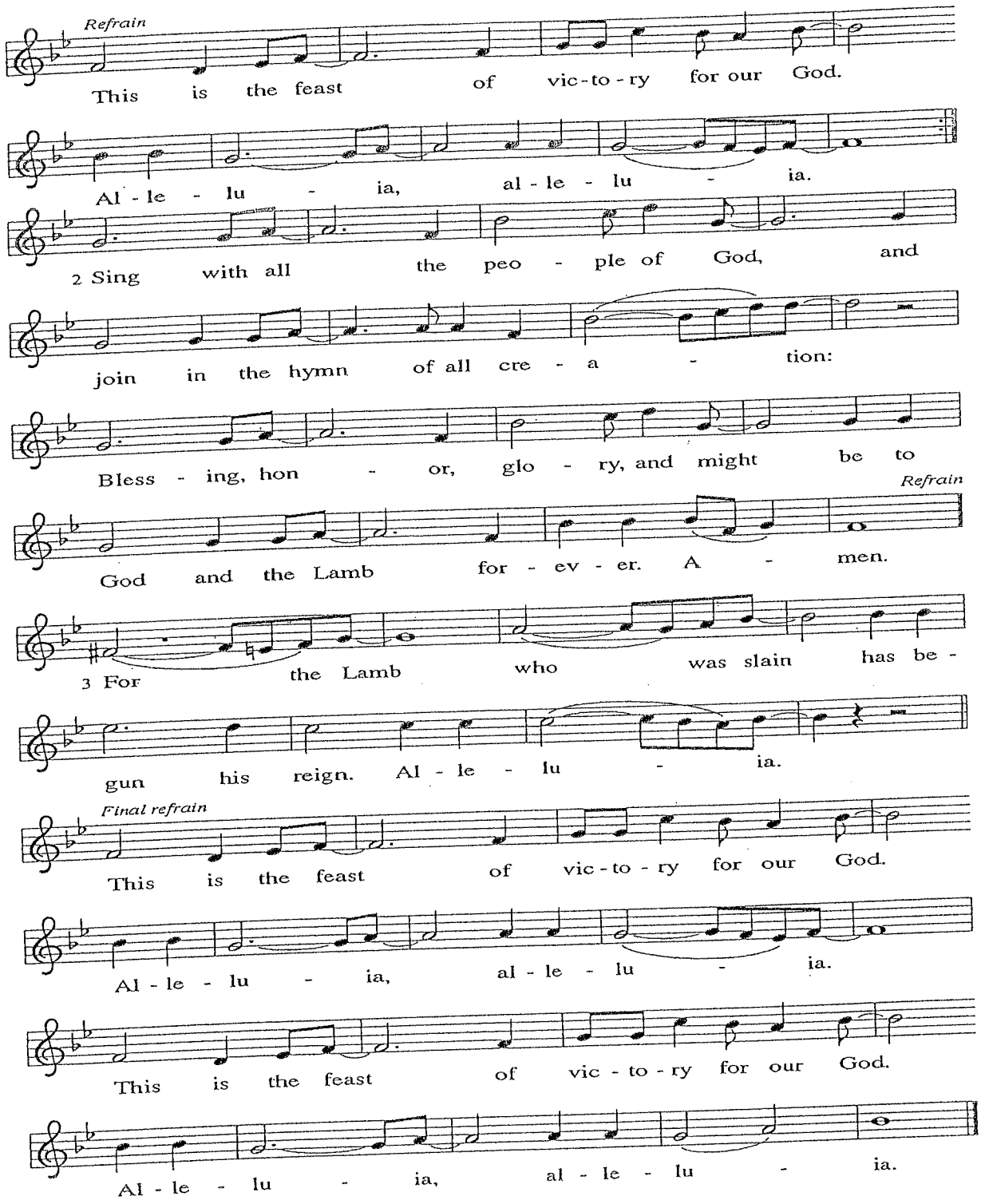
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

WORD

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

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "rotten grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.

1 I will sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
2 He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded rotten grapes.
3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.
4 What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield rotten grapes?
5 And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.
6 I will make it a wasteland; it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns;
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah are his cherished garden;
he expected justice but saw bloodshed; righteousness but heard a cry!

Psalm: Psalm 80:7-15

Look down from heaven, O God; behold and tend this vine. (Ps. 80:14, 15)

7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.
8 You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
you cast out the nations and planted it.
9 You cleared the ground for it;
it took root and filled the land.
10 The mountains were covered by its shadow
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.
11 You stretched out its tendrils to the sea
and its branches to the river.
12 Why have you broken down its wall,
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?
13 The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.
14 Turn now, O God of hosts,
look down from heaven;
15 behold and tend this vine;
preserve what your right hand has planted.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4B-14

Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.

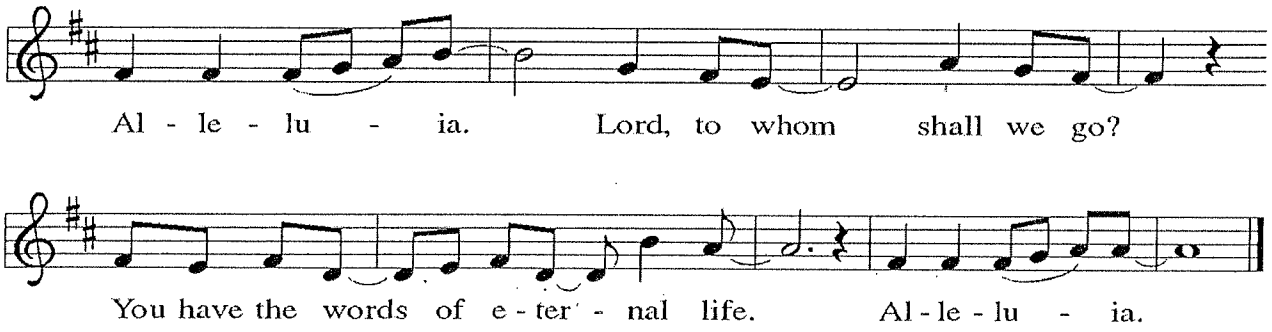
[Paul writes:] 4b If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more:
5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of
Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor
of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.
8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing
Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them
as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a
righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in
Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power
of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death,
11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on
to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not
consider that I have laid hold of it, but one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies
behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal, toward the
prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.

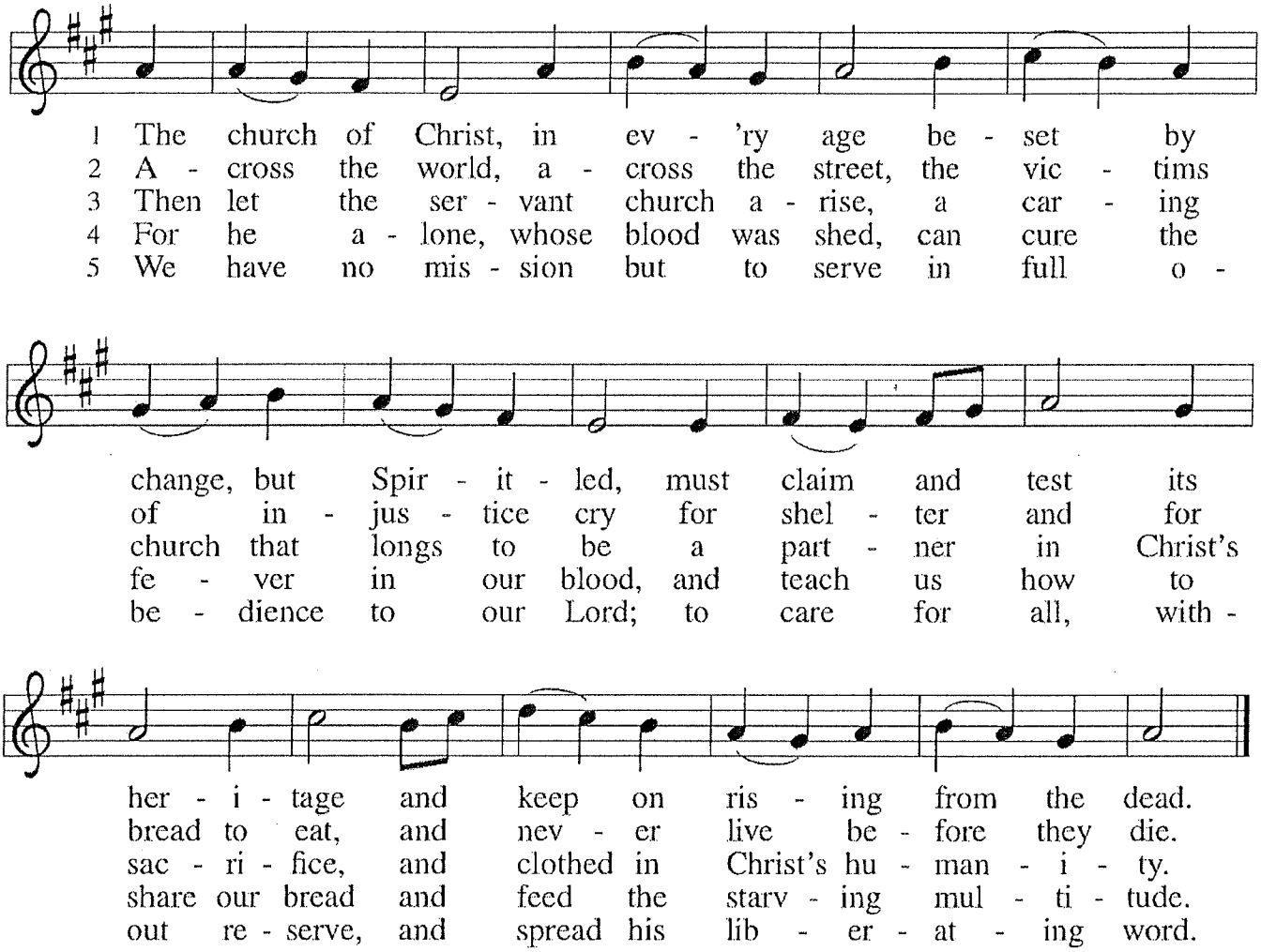
[Jesus said:] 33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard,
put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to
tenants and went away. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the
tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed
another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they
treated them in the same way. 37 Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect
my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir;
come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the
vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do
to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death
and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest
time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:
'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?
43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a
people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces,
and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."
45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was
speaking about them. 46 They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because
they regarded him as a prophet.

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

MESSAGE **PASTOR BOB HANSEN**

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 729

The Church of Christ, in Every Age

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
Music: WAREHAM, William Knapp, 1698–1768
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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;
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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Seeking the Spirit of God who makes all things new, we pray for the church and the world.

A brief silence.

God of every generation, we give thanks for all who have sought to renew and transform your holy church. Inspire us to follow their example in our own day. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of every creature, bless and protect the earth and all those who dwell within it. We give thanks for those who have helped us to see your Spirit in creation. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of every tribe and nation, restore peace to the world's conflict zones, and shelter those who live within them. We pray especially for the safety of displaced people and refugees. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of every comfort, you made us in your own image. Grant healing and relief to all who are sick or suffering. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of every truth, you draw us nearer to you through your holy word. We give thanks for teachers of the faith. Fill their hearts with your Spirit, that they inspire others with your truth. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

God of every soul, you are the one who calls us home. We give thanks for all the saints who have been restored to perfect unity with you. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Trusting in your boundless grace, O God, we lift up these spoken prayers and those in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
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

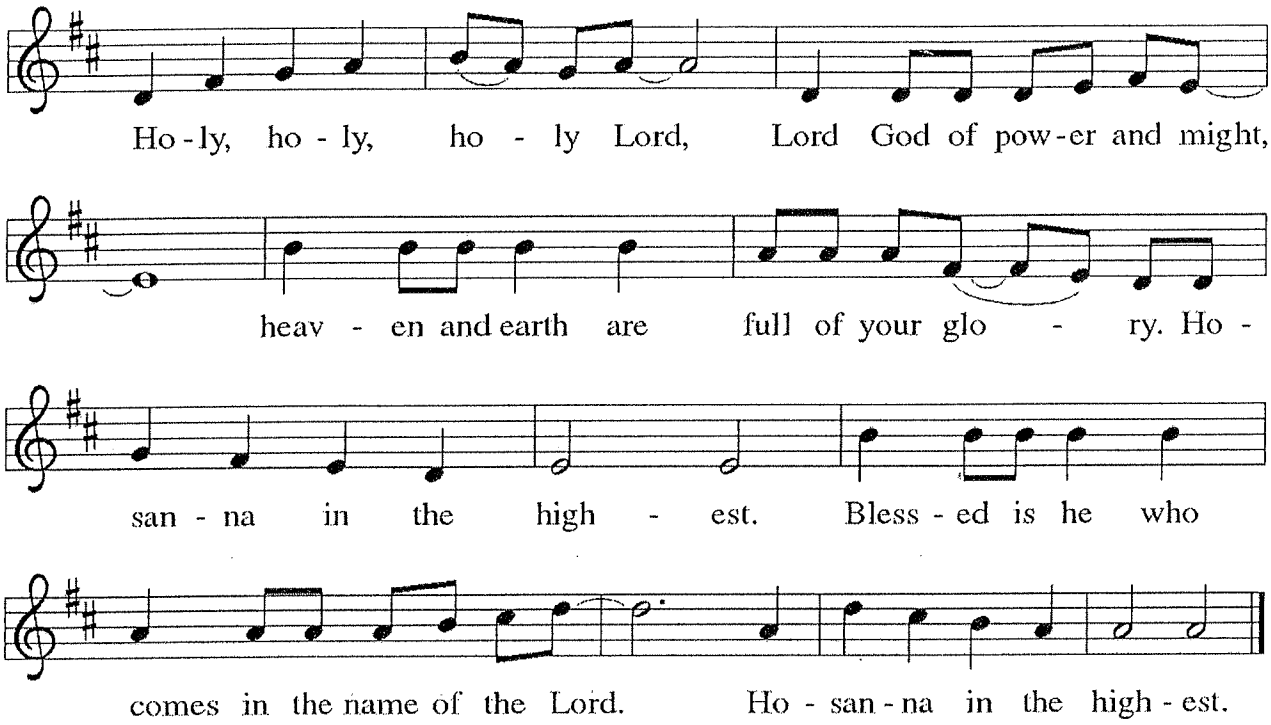
God of creation,
you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly.
All blessings are from you;
make us generous with what we have.
Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts
in service to you and in love to our neighbors,
today and always.
Amen.

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.



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

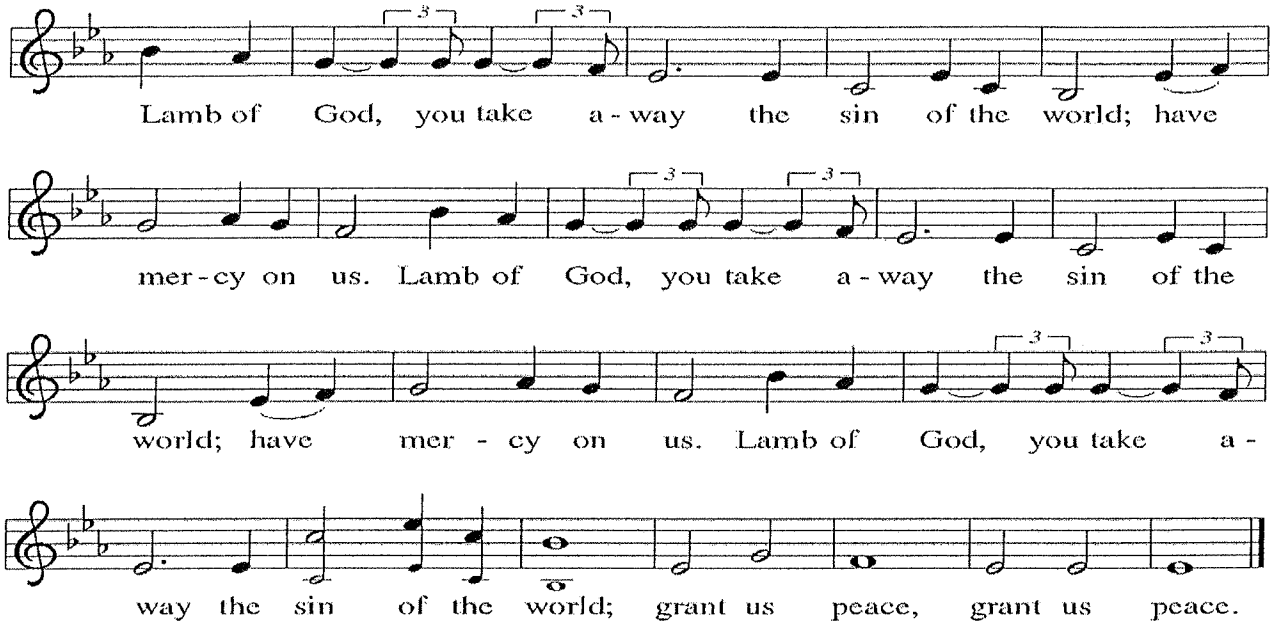
Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.

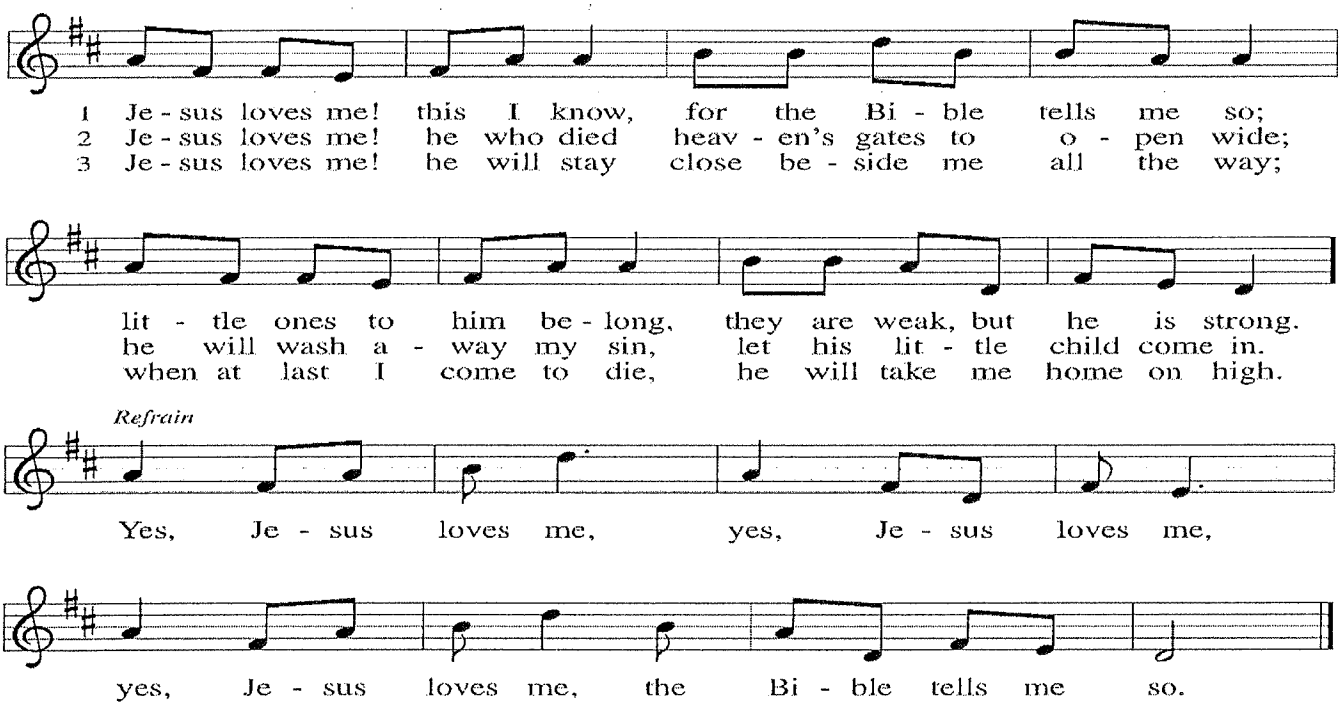
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Christ invites you to this table.
All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!



COMMUNION HYMN ELW 497

Jesus Loves Me!



Text: Anna B. Warner, 1820–1915, alt.
Music: JESUS LOVES ME, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Sustaining God,
with this bread and cup,
you nourish us with mercy and abundant life.
By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world.
Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love,
following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.
Amen.

SENDING

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

BLESSING

The God of love
draw you into full accord and one mind,
in the body of Christ Jesus.
Amen.

The God of hope
grant you strength and joy in all circumstances
through the interceding of the Spirit.
Amen.

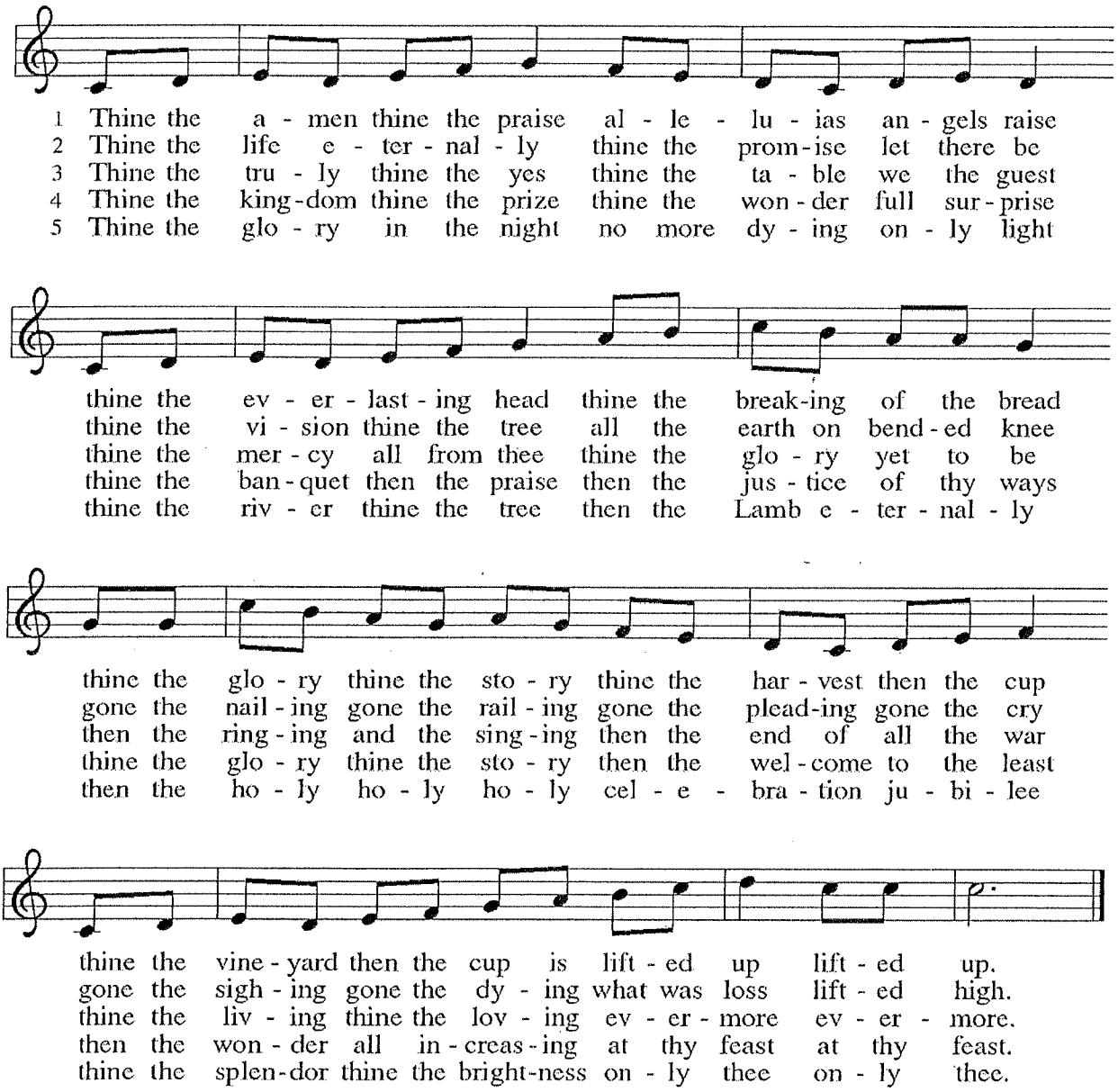
The God of grace
✢ bless you now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN (see page 16)

DISMISSAL

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.
Thanks be to God.

SENDING HYMN ELW 826

Thine the Amen

Text: Herbert F. Brokering, b. 1926
Music: THINE, Carl F. Schalk, b. 1929
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