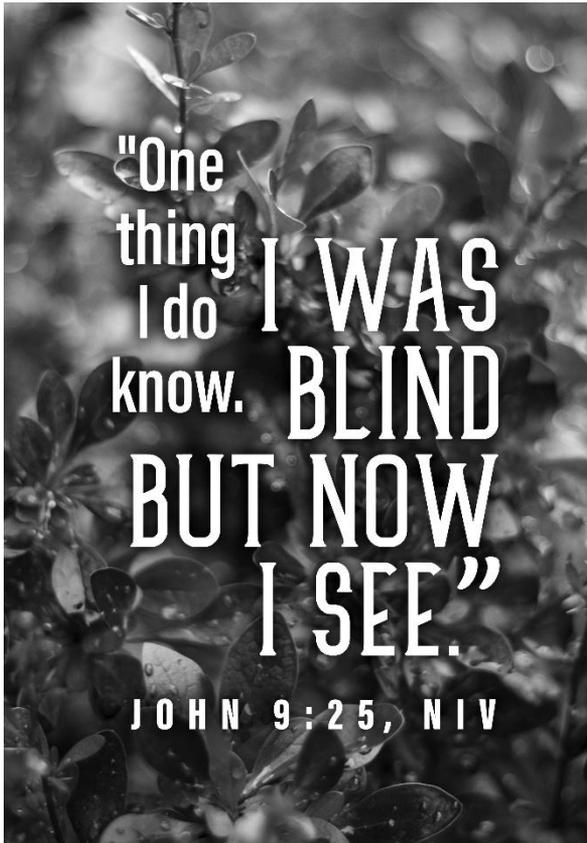


Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✠ Holy Communion ✠

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 15, 2026



Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

C: Amen

P: Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

Kneel

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain
the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of
your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding
Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: 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.

C: Amen

Stand

GATHERING HYMN *Christ, the Life of All the Living*

1 Christ, the life of all the liv - ing, Christ, the death of death, our foe,
 2 You have suf - fered great af - flic - tion and have borne it pa - tient - ly,
 3 Then, for all that bought my par - don, for the sor - rows deep and sore,

Christ, your - self for me once giv - ing to the dark - est depths of woe:
 e - ven death by cru - ci - fix - ion, ful - ly to a - tone for me;
 for the an - guish in the gar - den, I will thank you ev - er - more;

through your suf - f'ring, death, and mer - it life e - ter - nal I in - her - it.
 for you chose to be tor - ment - ed that my doom should be pre - vent - ed.
 thank you for the groan - ing, sigh - ing, for the bleed - ing and the dy - ing,

Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks are due, dear - est Je - sus, un - to you.
 Thou - sand, thou - sand thanks are due, dear - est Je - sus, un - to you.
 for that last tri - um - phant cry, praise you ev - er - more on high.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

KYRIE



A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.



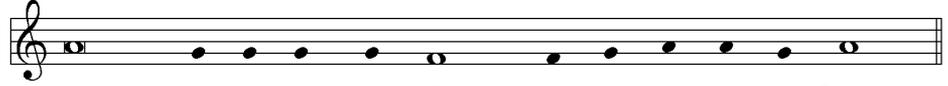
A For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



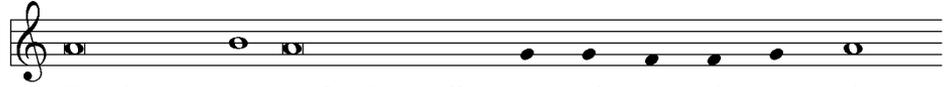
A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



A For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.



A Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord. **C** A - men

PRAYER OF THE DAY**P**: Let us pray.

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Sit

WORD**FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the Spirit of the LORD, designating David as the LORD's chosen successor to Saul.

A: A Reading from First Samuel:

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ² Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'" ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." ⁴ Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵ He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the LORD." ⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was

ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23

The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.



You have a - noint - ed my head with oil.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.



- ¹ The LORD | is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.
- ² **The LORD makes me lie down | in green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.**
- ³ You restore my | soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways | for your name’s sake.
- ⁴ **Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I
shall | fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they | comfort me. R**
- ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence | of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.
- ⁶ **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever. R**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

Because we now live in the divine light which is Jesus Christ, we conduct our lives in ways that reflect the light of Christ, so that our activity is truly pleasing to God.

A: A Reading from Ephesians:

⁸ Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. ¹² For it

is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly,¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!

Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Stand

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra-cious and mer-ci-ful,
slow to an - ger, and a-bound-ing in stead-fast love.

GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St John, the ninth chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷ saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am he.” ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been

blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰ The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard

this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON.....Pastor Gerald Kliner

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY *Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound*

1 A - maz - ing grace, how sweet the sound, that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; he will my shield and

now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.

APOSTLES' 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

A brief silence is held after the introduction.

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

After each petition:

P: Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

The prayers conclude:

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

C: Amen

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Peace be with you. R: Peace be with you.

Sit

MEAL

OFFERING

The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.

ANTHEM

Amazing Gracearr. Koerts

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir -
 it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
 not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re-store to me the
 joy of your sal-va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

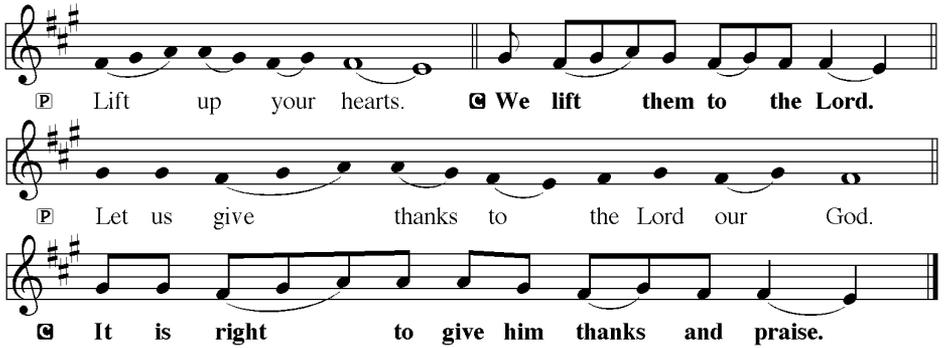
OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray.

C: 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

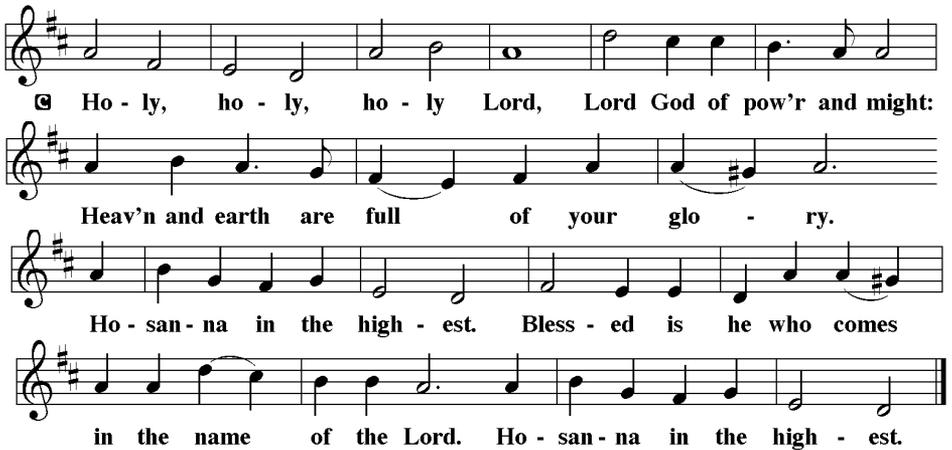
P The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.



☐ 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.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, 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.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection,
and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

C: Amen

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

P: Come to the table.
 Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

C: Thanks be to God.



C 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.

Sit

COMMUNION

All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may say: Amen

COMMUNION HYMN *Be Thou My Vision*

1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
 4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,

naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!

thou my best thought by day and by night,
 Thou my soul's shel - ter, thou my high tow'r,
 thou, and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
 great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Stand

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

C: Amen

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: Let us pray.

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.

C: Amen

SENDING

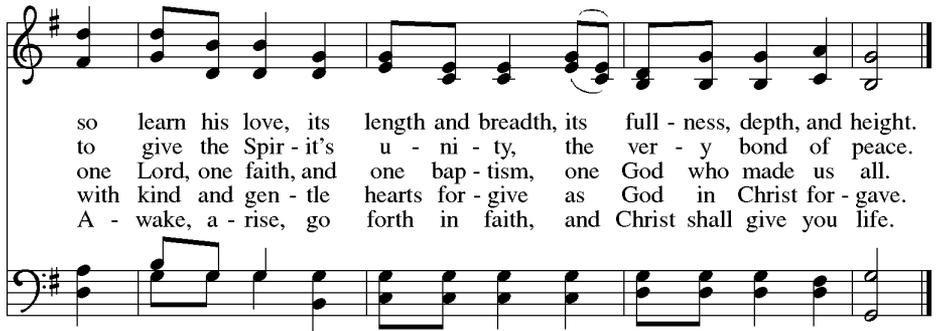
BLESSING

P: 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.

C: Amen

SENDING HYMN *Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death*

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. Below the staves, there are five lines of lyrics, numbered 1 through 5. The lyrics are: 1 A - wake, O sleep - er, rise from death, and Christ shall give you light; 2 To us on earth he came to bring from sin and fear re - lease, 3 There is one bod - y and one hope, one Spir - it and one call, 4 Then walk in love as Christ has loved, who died that he might save; 5 For us Christ lived, for us he died, and con - quered in the strife.



so learn his love, its length and breadth, its full - ness, depth, and height.
 to give the Spir - it's u - ni - ty, the ver - y bond of peace.
 one Lord, one faith, and one bap - tism, one God who made us all.
 with kind and gen - tle hearts for - give as God in Christ for - gave.
 A - wake, a - rise, go forth in faith, and Christ shall give you life.

Text: F. Bland Tucker, 1895–1984
 Music: AZMON, Carl G. Gläser, 1784–1829
 Text © 1980 Augsburg Publishing House, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

Please be seated for a special congregational meeting.

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Fred Harbaugh, Jean Nolan, Diana Rooker, Susan Christ, Greg Eckenrode; **Lay Asst:** Dave Bausinger; **Comm. Asst.:** Candy Watkins

Acolyte: Dylan Sherman; **Altar Guild:** Rita Strickler, Carol Winter;

Greeters/Presenters: Rhonda Koch, Ron Yeagle

Cantor: Candy Watkins; **Flower Delivery:** Jody Fullmer

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Nelson Silverstrim and Doris Webb Silverstrim, on the 81st anniversary of their wedding, March 17, 1945, by their sons and families.

The Basket of Flowers is given to the Glory of God and in honor of Carol Hessert and in loving memory of what would have been Sam and Carol's 64th wedding anniversary on March, 16th, with love from their daughter Pam.

The Basket of Flowers is given to the Glory of God and glorious welcome to our Candidate for Senior Pastor from the Messiah Congregation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Messiah Church! It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name and information to a congregation member. *We hope to see you again.*

This morning we welcome Pastor Gerald Kliner. Pastor Kliner is our candidate for Senior Pastor and will lead worship today. This candidate comes to us with many years of Pastoral experience and has demonstrated a deep love for the Lord and a collaborative, visionary style of leadership.

Your vote matters! Immediately, following the service, we encourage all members to remain for a special congregational meeting to vote on extending an official call to this candidate.

It's that time again ... time to kick off our annual Sew-a-Sack! We will gather in Shaheen Hall to sew the backpacks for the LWR School Kits on **Monday-Tuesday, March 16-17, 9 a.m.-2-ish p.m.** Lunch will be served. Don't sew? There are jobs for everyone – marking fabric, cutting, ironing seams, snipping off loose ends of thread, etc. You don't have to stay the whole time. **Come when you can ... leave when you must.** Please sign up in the narthex or call the office to let us know you are coming. **We hope you can join us!**

The Kids Lent Event will be held Saturday, March 21st from 9 - noon. Registration forms can be found online or in the alleyway entrance.

Please join us Wednesday nights for our Lenten Vespers at 6:30 pm. We look forward to seeing you!

Copies of *Behold Your King!* a Lenten Devotional Booklet and Lenten Self-Denial Calendars & Banks are available in the Narthex,

Calling all pie makers!! If you like to bake, especially pies, please share your favorite pie with us at our **pie social**. The fellowship committee will be hosting a pie social on **March 29th**, immediately following worship and would love to see how many pies we can get. If you would be willing to make a pie for our social, please sign-up on the sheet in the Narthex. The fellowship committee will provide the beverages and cool whip; we just need the pies.

Do you like toy trains? There is a basement full of toy trains at the THOMAS T. TABER MUSEUM...and your opportunity to see them on SUNDAY, APRIL 26 (12:15-2:15 p.m.). The cost is just \$6.50 per person (adult and children).

Tickets will be available in the narthex on April 12 and 19. WELCA members are providing a sandwich/salad lunch immediately after the Service for all "Museum Tourists". Then we'll car-pool to the Museum on W. Fourth Street.

EASTER FLOWER ORDERS DUE March 29th. Order forms are in the Narthex. Four varieties available. Each cost \$8.00. Please make checks out to Messiah Lutheran Church with Easter Flowers in the memo line. *Thank you.*

We are looking for volunteers to deliver Easter flowers to our homebound members. If you are able please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex. Thank you!

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

JARED GIST, ORGANIST

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702

(570) 326-9171 | www.messiahsouth.org

Unbelievable!

This story from the Gospel of John captures the religious leadership in Jerusalem in a struggle to understand this Jesus who restores sight to a person born blind. This miraculous healing is so unbelievable, so contrary to the leaders' understanding, that they reject it altogether, even accusing the man of lying. Their quest for a certainty that feels familiar forces them to reject the miracle in front of them and closes them off to a greater truth—that the Messiah has come in Christ Jesus.

Certainty and its pursuit often disrupt our ability to see reality, which is at its core a mystery. *Mystery* in the Christian tradition refers to that deep truth that surpasses our understanding, as in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or the efficacy of the sacraments. We know them as true, but not how or why they are so. Mysteries transcend the world of certainty, and our efforts to possess certainty, like those of the religious leaders in John 9, can cut us off from something miraculous happening right in front of us.

How much conflict and division in our church and in our world is amplified by our pursuit of certainty? How many possibilities have we missed in our commitment to the way things are? How often in our pursuit of certainty do we use it to hoard power and keep others on the outside looking in? Certainty is the enemy of community because it rejects the very notion that God may be doing a new thing.

Embracing mystery in our life of faith looks like learning to say “I don’t know,” “Maybe,” and “What if . . . ?” It asks us to let go of our need to control and understand, and to trust God’s promises more than our evidence. Mystery requires a posture of humility and curiosity, a willingness to look for God in inexplicable and unbelievable places and events. After all, we preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23), an unbelievable notion if ever there was one.

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