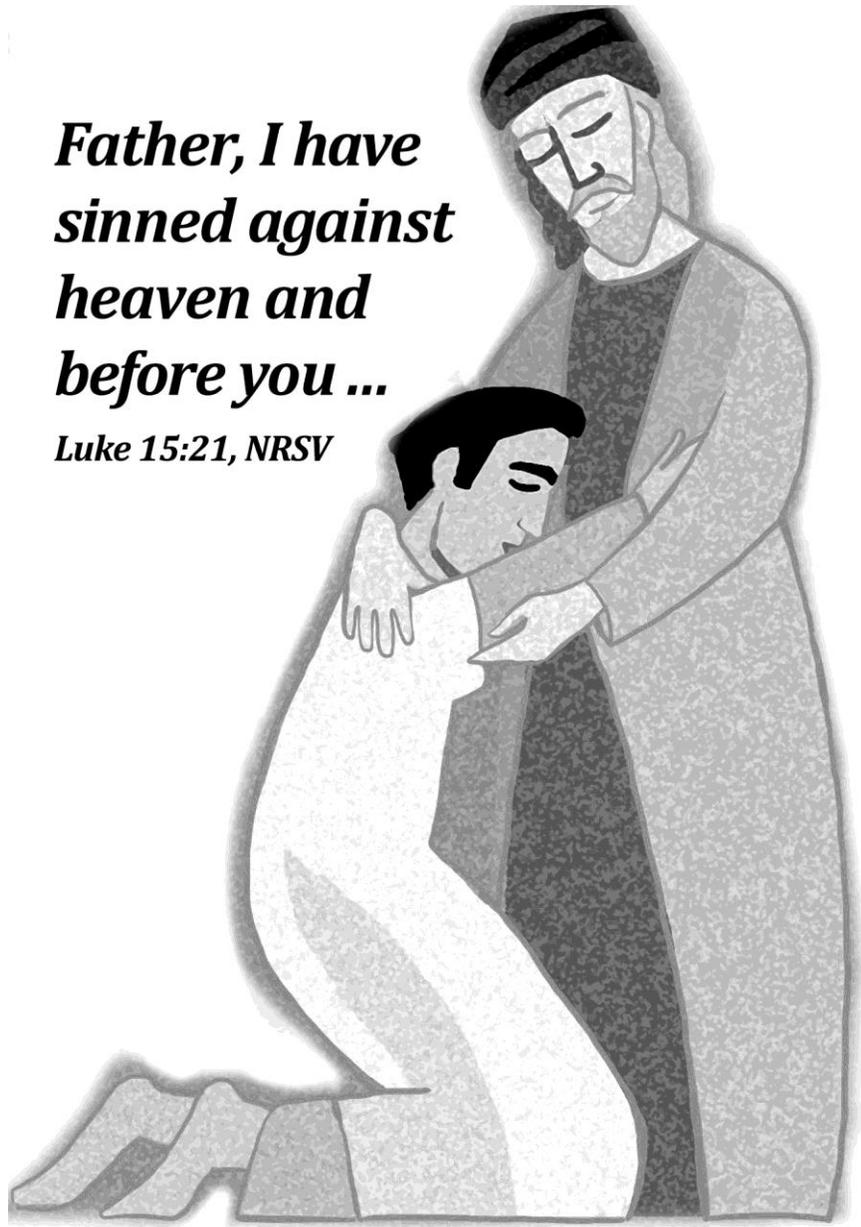


***Father, I have  
sinned against  
heaven and  
before you ...***

***Luke 15:21, NRSV***



**St. David's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Liturgy of Word and Sacrament  
Sunday, March 31, 2019**

**9:30 AM**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**WOV Holy Communion Setting Four: Light of Christ**

**Pastor: The Reverend Faron H. Johnson**

**Minister of Music: Michael Busija**

**Church: 479-4110; Fax: 479-2994**

**[www.stdavidslutheran.org](http://www.stdavidslutheran.org)**

# ***Welcome to St. David's Lutheran Church!***

We are blessed by your presence and honored that you have chosen to worship with us today. Please take a moment to sign the friendship sheet that is located in the booklet at the end of each pew, near the center aisle. These sheets will be collected after the service.

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion** is offered to all who are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and who recognize the Sacrament as the true body and blood of our Lord. Baptized children are also welcome to receive the elements at the Lord's table at St. David's with the guidance and consent of their parents or guardians. Persons, who may not wish to receive the bread and wine of the communion, are still welcome to come to the table to receive a blessing. To do so please fold your hands and bow your head.

**Prayer Requests** may be made by placing the request in the small wooden box at the rear, near the doors through which you entered. The acolyte will collect the requests and they will be included during the prayers of the congregation.

**For your comfort** there is a restroom, equipped with a changing table and supplies and a water fountain located upstairs. Simply exit through the double doors back into the narthex. The restroom is straight ahead in the parlor, beside the grandfather clock, and the water fountain is to the right at the beginning of the hallway.

**Devotional** – The worship folder you are holding is also a weekly devotional booklet. The prayers and Scripture readings are appropriate for use at any time during the week. The liturgy itself is a Scripturally based order for daily prayer and devotion with Scriptural references noted where they apply. Even the hymns are appropriate tools for prayer and praise. Finally, there is a daily lectionary of Scripture readings for the rest of the week on the last printed page.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The psalm sets the tone this day: "Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!" Happy are those who have "become the righteousness of God" in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has "rolled away . . . the disgrace" of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Rejoice!

## WELCOME

## PRELUDE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The assembly stands.*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*Kneel/Stand*

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

*The minister stands and addresses the congregation.*

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

# GATHERING HYMN

*The assembly stands.*

## O Christ, Our Light, O Radiance True

1 O Christ, our light, O Ra - diance true, shine forth on  
2 Fill with the ra - diance of your grace the wan - d'ers  
3 Lord, o - pen all re - luc - tant ears and take a -  
4 Lord, let your mer - cy's gen - tle ray shine down on  
5 Make theirs with ours a sin - gle voice up - lift - ed,

those es - tranged from you, and bring them to your home a -  
lost in er - ror's maze. Set free all those whose hearts and  
way the need - less fears of those who trem - ble to ex -  
oth - ers strayed a - way. To those in con - science wound - ed  
ev - er to re - joice with wond - 'ring grat - i - tude and

gain, where their de - light shall nev - er end.  
minds some deep de - lu - sion haunts and binds.  
press the faith their in - most hearts con - fess.  
sore show heav - en's wait - ing, o - pen door.  
praise to you, O Lord, for bound - less grace.

Text: Johann Heermann, 1585–1647; tr. composite  
Music: O JESU CHRISTE, WAHRES LICHT, *Gesangbuch*, Nürnberg, 1676  
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## GREETING

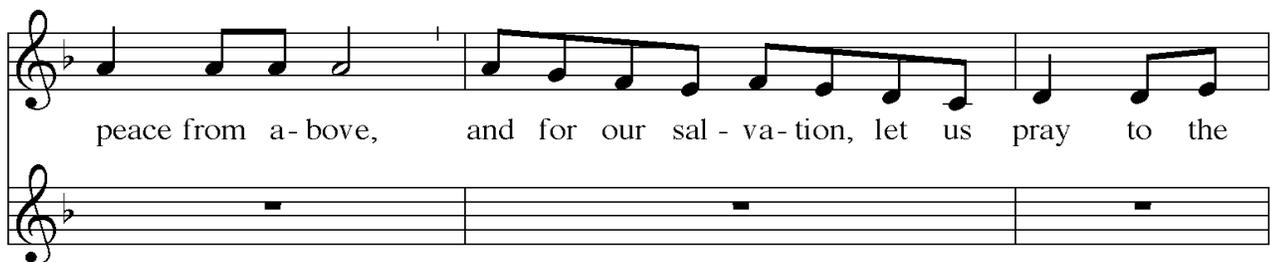
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

## KYRIE

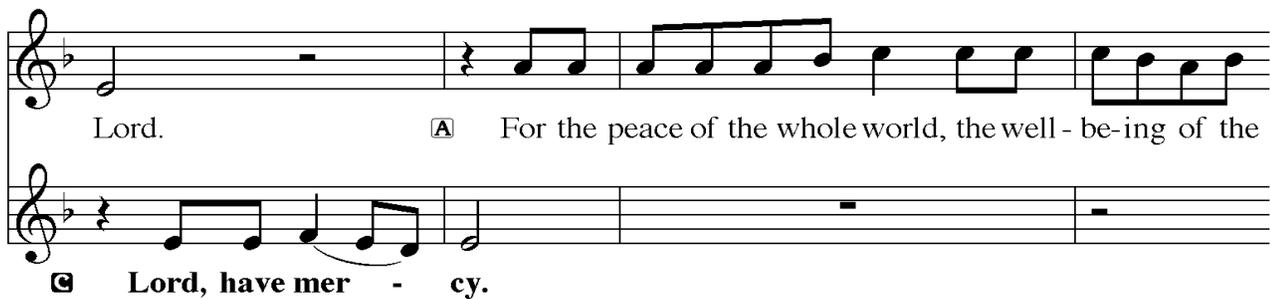


**A** In peace, in peace let us pray to the Lord. **A** For the

**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



peace from a-bove, and for our sal - va - tion, let us pray to the

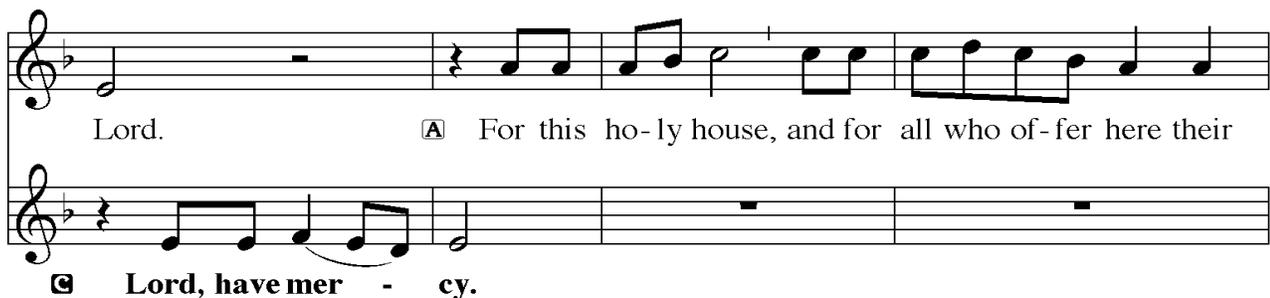


Lord. **A** For the peace of the whole world, the well - be - ing of the

**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



Church of God, and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the



Lord. **A** For this ho - ly house, and for all who of - fer here their

**C** Lord, have mer - cy.



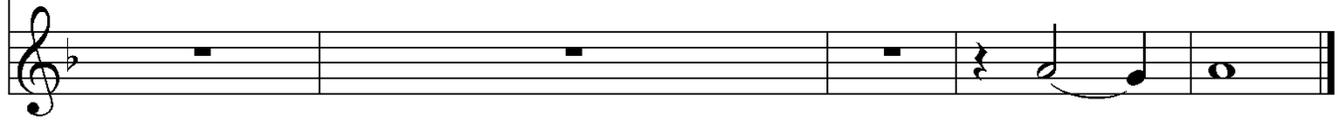
wor - ship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.



☪ Lord, have mer - cy.



☪ Help, save, com - fort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



☪ A - men

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Let us pray.

God of all mercy, by your power to heal and to forgive, graciously cleanse us from all sin and make us strong; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

### WORD WITH THE CHILDREN

## FIRST READING: Joshua 5:9-12

A reading from Joshua the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

*{By celebrating the Passover and eating the produce of the promised land instead of the miraculous manna that had sustained them in the desert, the Israelites symbolically bring their forty years of wilderness wandering to an end at Gilgal.}*

<sup>9</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

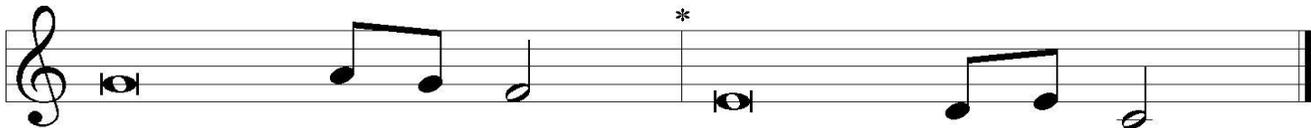
<sup>10</sup>While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup>The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM 32 (sung responsively)

Psalm Tone 1



<sup>1</sup>Happy are they whose transgressions | are forgiven,  
and whose sin is | put away!

<sup>2</sup>**Happy are they to whom the LORD im- | putes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there | is no guile! R**

<sup>3</sup>While I held my tongue, my bones with- | ered away,  
because of my groaning | all day long.

<sup>4</sup>**For your hand was heavy upon me | day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the | heat of summer.**

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my | sin to you,  
and did not con- | ceal my guilt.

<sup>6</sup>**I said, “I will confess my transgressions | to the LORD.”  
Then you forgave me the guilt | of my sin.**

<sup>7</sup>Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in | time of trouble;  
when the great waters overflow, they | shall not reach them.

<sup>8</sup>**You are my hiding-place; you preserve | me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts | of deliverance. R**

<sup>9</sup>“I will instruct you and teach you in the way that | you should go;  
I will guide you | with my eye.

<sup>10</sup>**Do not be like horse or mule, which have no | understanding;  
who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will | not stay near  
you.”**

<sup>11</sup>Great are the tribulations | of the wicked;  
but mercy embraces those who trust | in the LORD.

<sup>12</sup>**Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice | in the LORD;  
shout for joy, all who are | true of heart. R**

## **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

A reading from 2 Corinthians the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

*{One way to describe the gospel is the promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ's resurrection. This is Paul's strong message to the congregation in the city of Corinth.}*

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The assembly stands.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, who is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

## GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter.

### Glory to you, O Lord.

*{Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believed it was his obedience that earned his place in the father's home.}*

<sup>1</sup>Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.]

<sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: <sup>11b</sup>"There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" <sup>20</sup>So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>Then the

son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup>But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup>for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup>He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup>Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup>But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' <sup>31</sup>Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup>But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**SERMON**

*The assembly stands.*

# HYMN OF THE DAY

## Our Father, by Whose Name



1 Our Fa - ther, by whose name all par - ent - hood is known,  
2 O Christ, your - self a child with - in an earth - ly home,  
3 O Ho - ly Spir - it, bind our hearts in u - ni - ty



in love di - vine you claim each fam - 'ly as your own.  
with heart still un - de - filed to full a - dult - hood come:  
and teach us how to find the love from self set free;



Bless moth - ers, fa - thers, guard - ing well, with con - stant love as  
our chil - dren bless in ev - 'ry place that they may all be -  
in all our hearts such love in - crease that ev - 'ry home, by



sen - ti - nel, the homes in which your peo - ple dwell.  
hold your face and, know - ing you, may grow in grace.  
this re - lease, may be the dwell - ing place of peace.

Text: F. Bland Tucker, 1895–1984, alt.

Music: RHOSYMEDRE, John D. Edwards, 1806–1885

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Together we confess our faith:

**NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary,  
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

**With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.**

**He has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Seeking the grace, mercy, and love of almighty God, we offer our prayers for the church, for people in need, and for all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

God of abundant grace, guide your church to look upon people as you look upon them, with compassion and as deserving of mercy. Shape us to be worthy ambassadors of Christ. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Bestow dignity on migrant and seasonal farm and factory workers. When the time comes for them to leave jobs, provide new ways for them to make a livelihood. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Inspire musicians and poets (*like John Donne, whom we commemorate today*) to point to your unfathomable beauty and creativity. Enhance our vision of your holiness through their works. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Protect and preserve all people who look to you to be their hiding place (*especially*). Be their respite from trouble, and give them hope. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Erase the pain of trauma and the shame and stigma of social contempt. Change the hearts of those who bully or mistreat others, and heal broken relationships. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Invite your whole company of saints into eternal, joyful feasting. When we question your abundant mercy, soften our hearts to receive the gifts of faith and love. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Reveal your will as you receive our prayers, and conform our ways to your ways; through the saving work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

### And also with you.

*The minister and congregation may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you.

### Peace be with you.

*The assembly is seated.*

## OFFERING

## OFFERTORY

## OFFERTORY HYMN

### All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly



- 1 All who hun - ger, gath - er glad - ly; ho - ly man - na is our bread.
- 2 All who hun - ger, nev - er strang - ers; seek - er, be a wel - come guest.
- 3 All who hun - ger, sing to - geth - er, Je - sus Christ is liv - ing bread.



Come from wil - der - ness and wan - d'ring. Here in truth we will be fed.  
Come from rest - less - ness and roam - ing. Here in joy we keep the feast.  
Come from lone - li - ness and long - ing. Here in peace we have been fed.



You that yearn for days of full - ness, all a - round us is our food.  
We that once were lost and scat - tered in com - mu - nion's love have stood.  
Blest are those who from this ta - ble live their days in grat - i - tude.



Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.  
Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.  
Taste and see the grace e - ter - nal. Taste and see that God is good.

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955–1993

Music: HOLY MANNA, W. Moore, *Columbian Harmony*, 1825

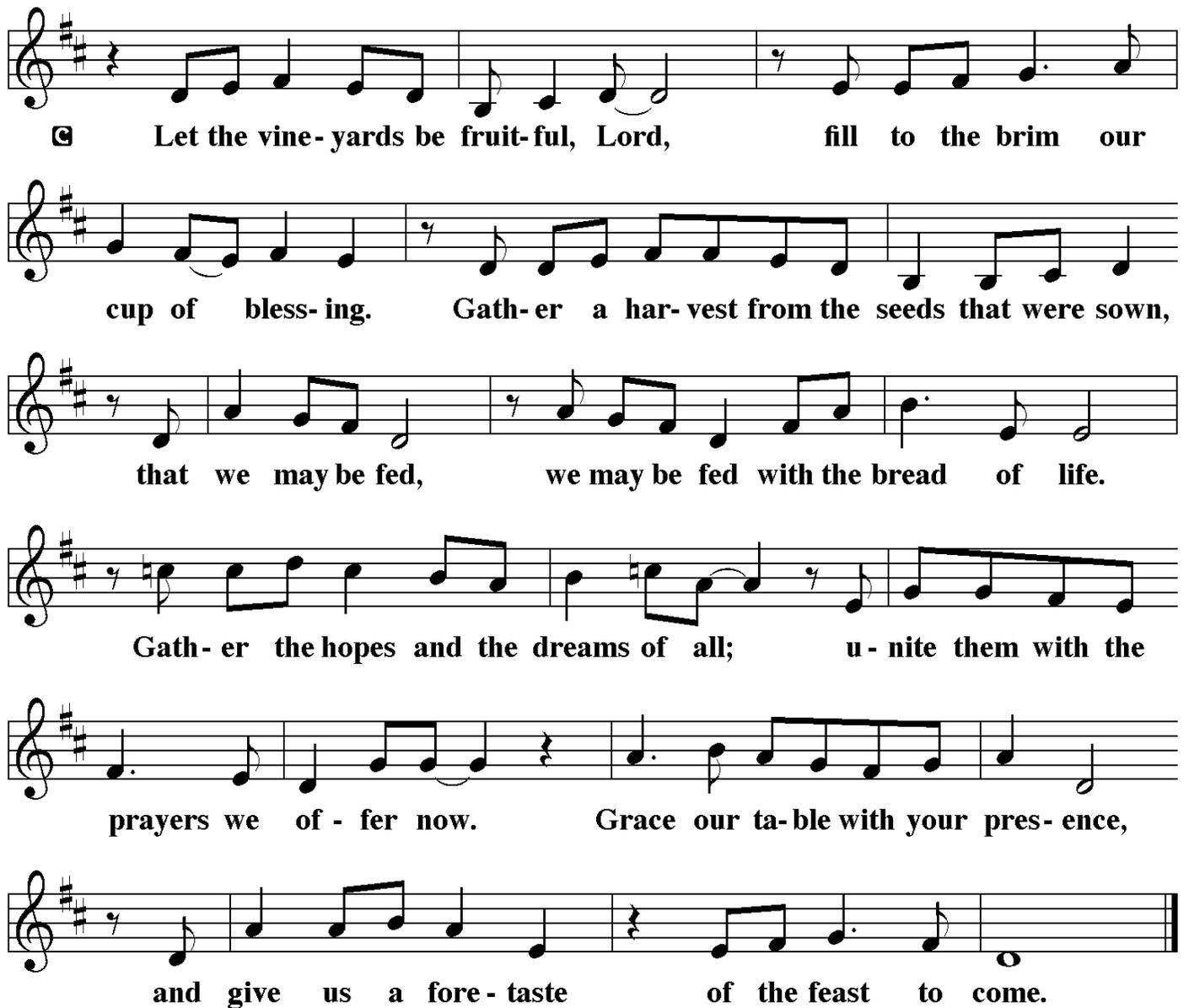
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*The assembly stands.*

## OFFERTORY RESPONSE



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, fill to the brim our  
cup of bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown,  
that we may be fed, we may be fed with the bread of life.  
Gath-er the hopes and the dreams of all; u-nite them with the  
prayers we of-fer now. Grace our ta-ble with your pres-ence,  
and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

## OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Blessed are you,

**O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. 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.

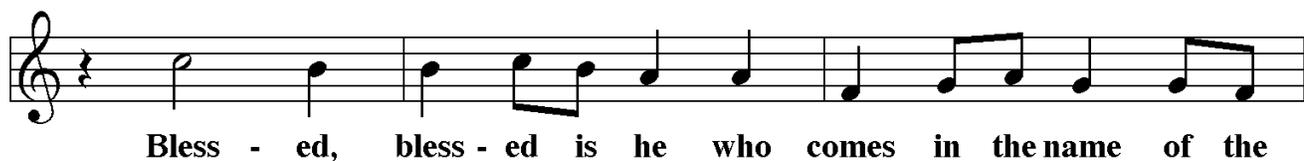
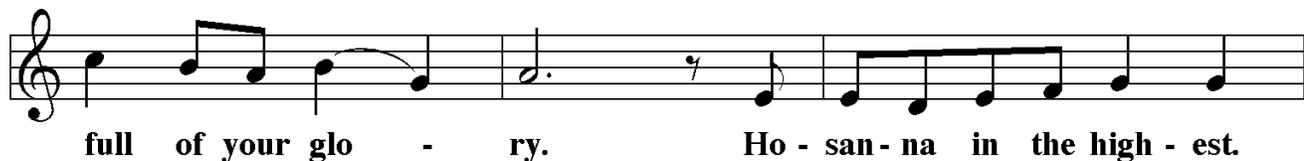
**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

## PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast.

Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

You are indeed holy, O God, the fountain of all holiness;  
you bring light from darkness, life from death, speech from silence.

We worship you for our lives and for the world you give us.

We thank you for the new world to come  
and for the love that will rule all in all.

We praise you for the grace shown to Israel, your chosen,  
the people of your promise:  
the rescue from Egypt, the gift of the promised land,  
the memory of the ancestors, the homecoming from exile,  
and the prophets' words that will not be in vain.

In all this we bless you for your only-begotten Son,  
who fulfilled and will fulfill all your promises.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the  
Lord's death until he comes.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore, O God, with this bread and cup  
we remember the incarnation of your Son:  
his human birth and the covenant he made with us.

We remember the sacrifice of his life:  
his eating with outcasts and sinners,  
and his acceptance of death.

But chiefly we remember his rising from the tomb,  
his ascension to the seat of power,  
and his sending of the holy and life-giving Spirit.

We cry out for the resurrection of our lives,  
when Christ will come again in beauty and power  
to share with us the great and promised feast.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit,  
that we and all who share in this bread and cup  
may be united in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
may enter the fullness of the kingdom of heaven,  
and may receive our inheritance with all your saints in light.

**Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

Join our prayers with those of your servants  
of every time and every place, and unite them  
with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest  
until he comes as victorious Lord of all.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

**Amen, amen, amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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;**

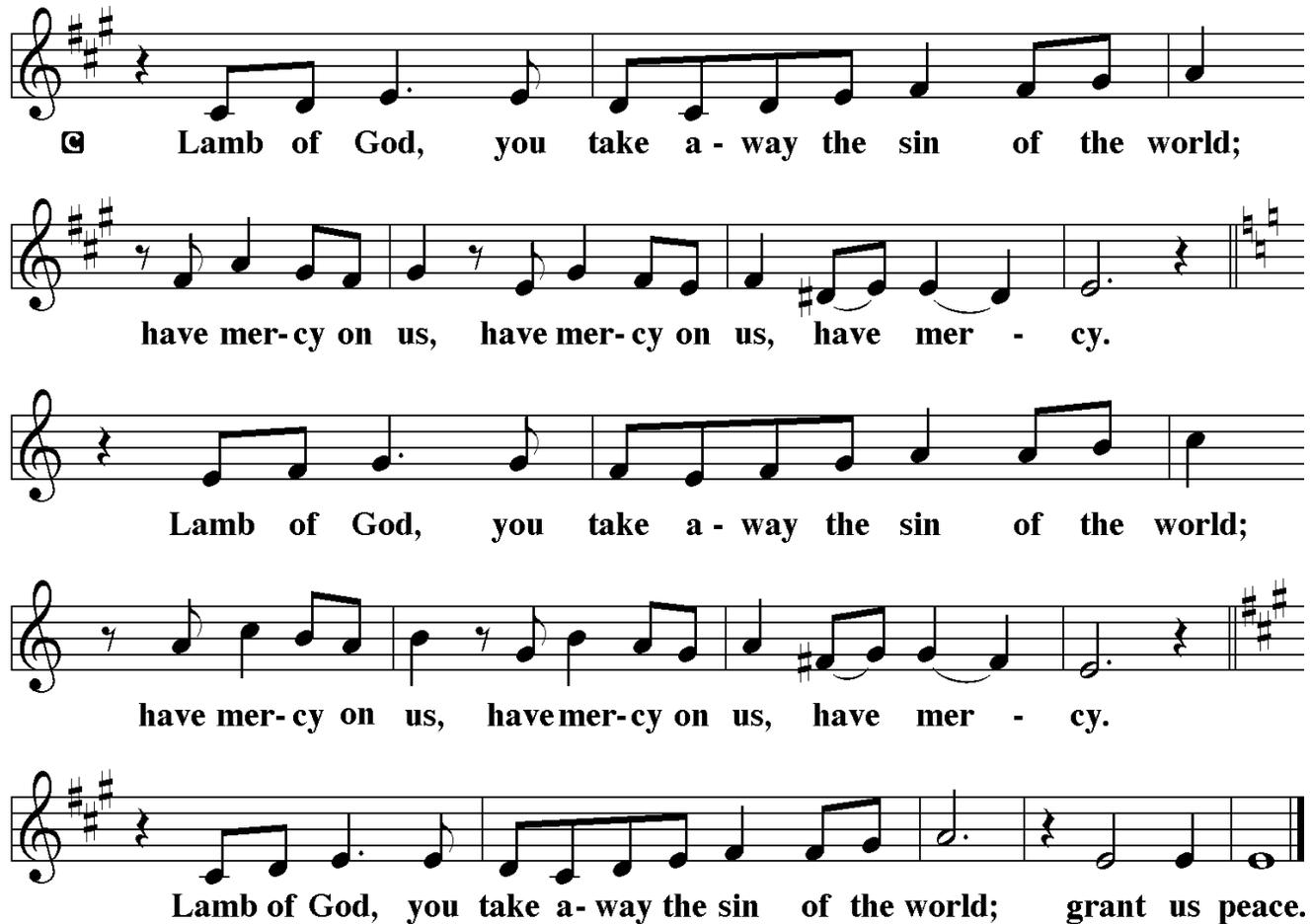
**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

## LAMB OF GOD



**Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;**

**have mer-cy on us, have mer-cy on us, have mer - cy.**

**Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;**

**have mer-cy on us, have mer-cy on us, have mer - cy.**

**Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion** is offered to all who are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and who recognize the Sacrament as the true body and blood of our Lord. Baptized children are also welcome to the Lord's table at St. David's with the guidance and consent of their parents or guardians.

Please come forward by the center aisle. Pick up a communion glass from the trays at the end of the center aisle. Then move to the altar where you may kneel or stand. After receiving the elements the empty glass can be returned to the tray for empty glasses as you return to your pew by the side aisles. Be sure to fill out the pew pad.

# COMMUNION HYMN

## Just As I Am, without One Plea

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea, but that thy blood was  
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y a con - flict,  
3 Just as I am, thou wilt re - ceive, wilt wel - come, par - don,  
4 Just as I am; thy love un - known has bro - ken ev - 'ry

shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
man - y a doubt, fight - ings and fears with - in, with - out,  
cleanse, re - lieve; be - cause thy prom - ise I be - lieve,  
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

The musical score is written in G minor (three flats) and 4/4 time. It consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The first system contains the first four lines of the hymn. The second system contains the next four lines. The third system contains the final line of the hymn, which ends with a double bar line.

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789–1871

Music: WOODWORTH, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

*The assembly stands.*

*After all have returned to their places, the minister may say these or similar words.*

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

**Amen.**

## **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray.

Pour out upon us the spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of those whom you have fed with one heavenly food; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Silence for reflection.*

## **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **QUIET MEDITATION**

## SENDING HYMN

### My Life Flows On in Endless Song



- 1 My life flows on in end - less song; a - bove earth's lam-en - ta - tion,
- 2 Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I hear that mu - sic ring - ing.
- 3 What though my joys and com-forts die? The Lord my Sav-ior liv - eth.
- 4 The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a foun - tain ev - er spring-ing!



I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new cre - a - tion.  
It finds an ech - o in my soul. How can I keep from sing-ing?  
What though the dark - ness gath-er round? Songs in the night he giv - eth.  
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from sing-ing?

#### *Refrain*



No storm can shake my in-most calm while to that Rock I'm cling-ing.



Since Christ is Lord of heav-en and earth, how can I keep from sing-ing?

Text: Robert Lowry, 1826–1899

Music: HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING, Robert Lowry, alt.

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**March 31, 2019**

### **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

#### **Still Far Off**

“While he was still far off . . .” (Luke 15:20). In one brief phrase a wrenching, shifting, and twisting story involving a wild cast of characters hangs in uneasy suspense.

“While he was still far off . . .” In those few words from a noble parable, we catch—or lose—our own uneasy breath because we know, at times more painfully than anything else, what it is to be “still far off.” We know the angst of uncertainty, the misery of guilt, the loneliness of distance, and the injury of shame. Wherever “far off” is—that distant country where shadows of disgrace and shards of reputation languish; where hope withers—it is not home.

Jesus doesn’t toss this parable carelessly to the wind. He carefully states each confounding sentence, unfolds every calibrated detail for a grumbling group offended by “this fellow” who welcomes sinners. With grace that stings, Jesus means the parable for the church, for us. Jesus messes with the tidy assumptions of each of us who turn our face from the “other,” from those “still far off.” When the church opens doors to some and closes them to others, when it sets the table for the likes of these and denies it to the likes of those, when it embraces the well-behaved but abandons the wrongdoers, it forgets that all of us—*all of us*—are “still far off,” longing for home.

The parable concludes, stunning, as any drama ever written, the dancers and singers, the hired hands, a household and neighborhood, a brother and father. The older brother is far off, left trying to figure it out. Chances are he never will, and neither will we. Grace is not to be figured out; it is to be received. It comes down a dirty road, where it opens healing arms to embrace us.

## *Daily Readings for the Week March 31-April 6*

<b>Sunday:</b>	Fourth Sunday in Lent Joshua 5:9-12 Psalm 32 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
<b>Monday:</b>	Psalm 53 Leviticus 23:26-41 Revelation 19:1-8
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Psalm 53 Leviticus 25:1-19 Revelation 19:9-10
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Psalm 53 2 Kings 4:1-7 Luke 9:10-17
<b>Thursday:</b>	Psalm 126 Isaiah 43:1-7 Philippians 2:19-24
<b>Friday:</b>	Psalm 126 Isaiah 43:8-15 Philippians 2:25—3:1
<b>Saturday:</b>	Psalm 126 Exodus 12:21-27 John 11:45-57

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