



**The Fourth Sunday of Easter  
April 21, 2024**

# FAITH LUTHERAN

## An Evangelical Lutheran Church

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**Ministers:** *The Disciples at Faith Lutheran Church*

**Pastor:** *The Rev. Thomas A. Cassem*

**Organist:** *Helena Bradford*

## INTRODUCTION

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

## **WE PREPARE**

### **WORSHIP PREPARATION**

*When you hear the Prelude, please be seated and observe silence as we prepare ourselves for the beginning of our worship service.*

**PRELUDE                    “The Lord’s My Shepherd”**

### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## I Know That My Redeemer Lives!



1 I know that my Re - deem - er lives! What com - fort  
 2 He lives tri - um - phant from the grave; he lives e -  
 3 He lives to grant me rich sup - ply; he lives to  
 4 He lives to si - lence all my fears; he lives to



this sweet sen - tence gives! He lives, he lives, who  
 ter - nal - ly to save; he lives ex - alt - ed,  
 guide me with his eye; he lives to com - fort  
 wipe a - way my tears; he lives to calm my



once was dead; he lives, my ev - er - liv - ing head!  
 throned a - bove; he lives to rule his church in love.  
 me when faint; he lives to hear my soul's com - plaint.  
 trou - bled heart; he lives all bless - ings to im - part.

- 5 He lives to bless me with his love;  
 he lives to plead for me above;  
 he lives my hungry soul to feed;  
 he lives to help in time of need.
- 7 He lives and grants me daily breath;  
 he lives, and I shall conquer death;  
 he lives my mansion to prepare;  
 he lives to bring me safely there.
- 6 He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;  
 he lives and loves me to the end;  
 he lives, and while he lives, I'll sing;  
 he lives, my prophet, priest, and king!
- 8 He lives, all glory to his name!  
 He lives, my Savior, still the same;  
 what joy this blest assurance gives:  
 I know that my Redeemer lives!

Text: Samuel Medley, 1738–1799, alt.

Music: DUKE STREET, alt. John Hatton, d. 1793

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# CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*As the presiding minister begins, all may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.*

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P 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.

C **Amen.**

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*The assembly kneels or stands. Silence is kept for reflection.*

P Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are captive 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.**

P 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.

C **Amen.**

## GREETING

P Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

P The joy and peace of God be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

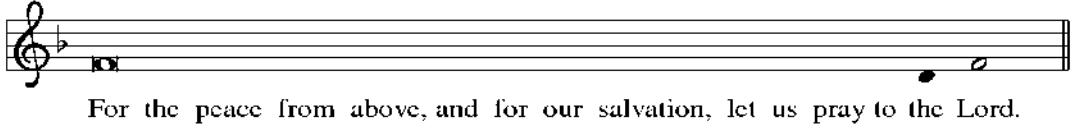
# WE PRAISE GOD

## KYRIE

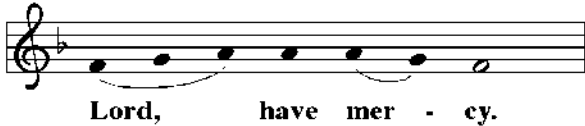
ELW pg. 138



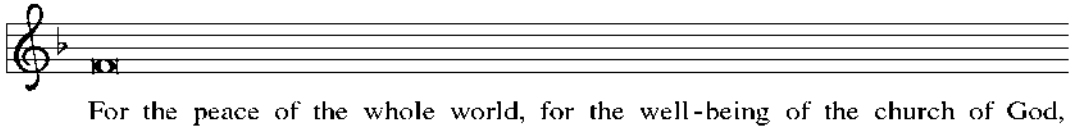
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



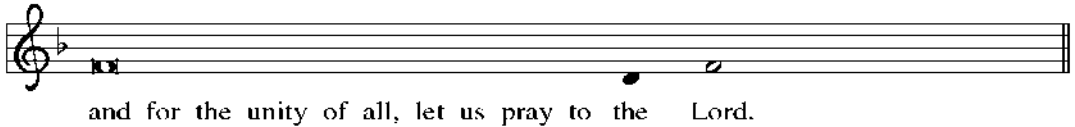
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



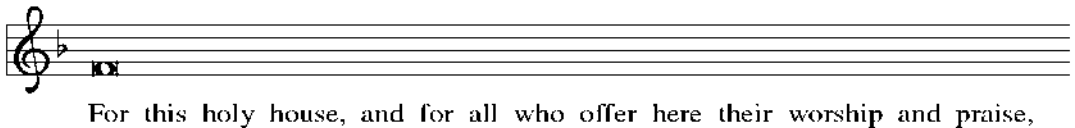
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



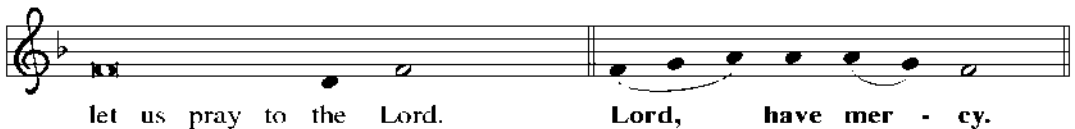
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



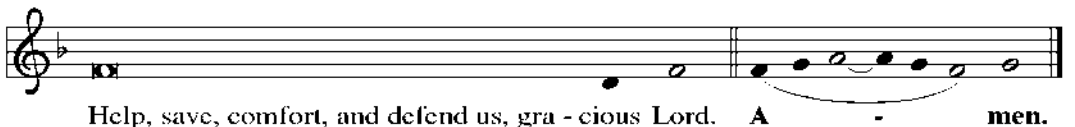
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



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



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb



who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich - es, wis - dom, and



strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.

**Hymn continues on next page**

*Refrain*

This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of

God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon - or,

glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

*Refrain*

This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was

slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Final refrain*

This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

**C** **O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

## **WE HEAR GOD'S WORD**

### **First Reading: Acts 4:5-12**

*Peter and John had been arrested the previous day because they were proclaiming the news of the resurrection to the people. In today's reading, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit so that he can proclaim salvation in Jesus' name to the religious authorities.*

<sup>5</sup>The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is

'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;  
it has become the cornerstone.'

<sup>12</sup>There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

**L** The Word of the Lord.

**C** **Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM: Psalm 23**

*Let us read it together.*

- <sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.**
- <sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.**
- <sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**
- <sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**
- <sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.**
- <sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

## Second Reading: 1 John 3:16-24

*Jesus' death on our behalf is the clearest demonstration of divine love. This is the very love we share with others, not just through our words but especially through our deeds. In sharing such love we fulfill God's commandments.*

<sup>16</sup>We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. <sup>17</sup>How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

<sup>18</sup>Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

<sup>19</sup>And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him <sup>20</sup>whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup>Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; <sup>22</sup>and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

<sup>23</sup>And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. <sup>24</sup>All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

L The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW pg. 142

*The assembly stands to welcome the gospel.*



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

## **Gospel: John 10:11-18**

*In language that recalls the twenty-third psalm, Jesus describes himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is willing to die for them, and he is able to overcome death for them.*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 10th chapter.

**C** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] <sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

**P** The Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **CHILDREN’S SERMON**

*All children are invited to come to the Altar steps for a special “Children’s message”.*

**SERMON**

**Rev. Thomas A. Cassem**

# WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

## HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 502

### The King of Love My Shepherd Is



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, whose good - ness  
2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, my ran - somed  
3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, but yet in  
4 In death's dark valc I fear no ill, with thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if  
soul he lead - eth and, where the ver - dant  
love he sought me, and on his shoul - der  
Lord, be - side me, thy rod and staff my



I am his and he is mine for - ev - er.  
pas - tures grow, with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.  
gent - ly laid, and home, re - joic - ing, brought me.  
com - fort still; thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;  
thine unction grace bestoweth;  
and, oh, what transport of delight  
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so, through all the length of days,  
thy goodness faileth never.  
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise  
within thy house forever.

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821-1877

Music: St. COLUMBA, Irish tune

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# HOLY BAPTISM

## PRESENTATION

*Candidates for baptism, sponsors, and parents gather with the ministers at the font.  
The assembly is seated.*

In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith, love, and obedience to the will of God.

*The presiding minister addresses parents or others who bring for baptism children who are not able to answer for themselves:*

Called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you Luisa, desire to be baptized into Christ?

*Response: I do.*

As you receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities:  
to live among God's faithful people,  
to come to the word of God and the holy supper,  
to learn the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,  
to study the holy scriptures,  
to grow in faith and prayer;  
so that you may learn to trust God,  
proclaim Christ through word and deed,  
care for others and the world God made,  
and work for justice and peace.

Do you promise to grow in the Christian faith and life?

*Response: I do.*

*The presiding minister addresses the assembly:*

People of God, do you promise to support Luisa and pray for her in her new life in Christ?

*Response: We do.*

## PROFESSION OF FAITH

*The presiding minister addresses candidates for baptism as well as the parents and sponsors of young children. The assembly may join in the responses.*

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

***Response:* I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

***Response:* I renounce them.**

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

***Response:* I renounce them.**

*The presiding minister addresses the candidates and the assembly.*

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**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.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**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.**

## THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

*Water may be poured into the font before or during the thanksgiving.*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood, you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## BAPTISM

Luisa Nadeline Jorgensen, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life.

Sustain Luisa with the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.

**Amen.**



Luisa, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

**Amen.**

## **WELCOME**

*A lighted candle is given to the parent as a representative of the congregation says to the newly baptized child:*

Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Let us welcome the newly baptized.

**We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share; join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.**



## Prayers of Intercession

L Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

*A brief silence.*

L O God our holy one, you feed our deepest hungers. As we share the holy meal that is the body and blood of Jesus given for us, lead us to share all that we have, and find, in generosity, abundant life. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L O God our creator, you bring forth all life on earth. Calm storms, bring water to parched places, and protect the planet that it might sustain life in all its variety. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L O God our savior, you offer wisdom and guidance beyond all human knowledge. Protect and care for all people. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L O God our elder, you care for all your children. Guide those who journey in grief, hope, and uncertainty. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L O God our center, you bring all people together in you. Help us to remember our identity and purpose in our ministry. Move us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to share in beloved community. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L We lift up to you all who are especially on our hearts silently or spoken.  
*(A Brief Silence for Petitions)* God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L O God our resting place, your Son Jesus promised that we are held in your love forever. We remember our beloved who have died. As we remember and share their love, comfort those who mourn. God of grace,

**C hear our prayer.**

L Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

**C Amen.**

## SHARING OUR LORD'S PEACE

*The minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.*

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you all.

**C** **And also with you.**



## OFFERING

*Offerings given for the mission of the church. Please place offerings in basket in Narthex.*

# MUSICAL OFFERING

## Make me a servant

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are: "Make me a ser - vant, hum - ble and meek. Lord, let me lift up those who are weak. And may the prayer of my heart al - ways be: Make me a ser - vant, make me a ser - vant, make me a ser - vant to - day." The chords are: F, Dm7, Gm7, C7, Gm7, Bb/C, C7, Bb/F, F, F sus 4, F, A, Dm, Dm/C, G2/B, Bbm6, F/A, Gm7, F/A, Gm7, F/C, C7 sus, F2.

F Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>  
Make me a ser - vant, hum - ble and meek.

Gm<sup>7</sup> Bb/C C<sup>7</sup> Bb/F F F sus<sub>4</sub> F A  
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.

Dm Dm/C G<sup>2</sup>/B Bbm<sup>6</sup>  
And may the prayer of my heart al - ways be:

F/A Gm<sup>7</sup> F/A Gm<sup>7</sup>  
Make me a ser - vant, make me a ser - vant,

F/C C<sup>7</sup> sus F<sup>2</sup>  
make me a ser - vant to - day.

Text and music: Kelly Willard

Text and tune © 1982 Willing Heart Music (admin. Maranatha! Music c/o The Copyright Company) and Maranatha! Music (admin. The Copyright Company)

## OFFERING PRAYER

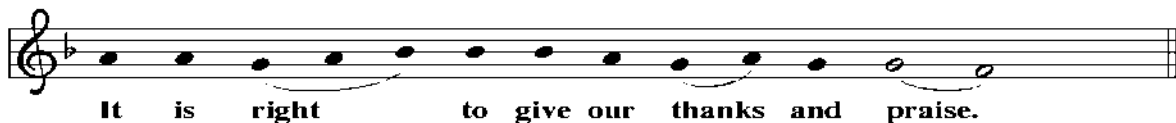
P Let us pray.

C **Risen One, you call us to believe and bear fruit. May the gifts that we offer here be signs of your abiding love. Form us to be your witnesses in the world, through Jesus Christ, our true vine. Amen.**

## WE RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT

### HOLY COMMUNION

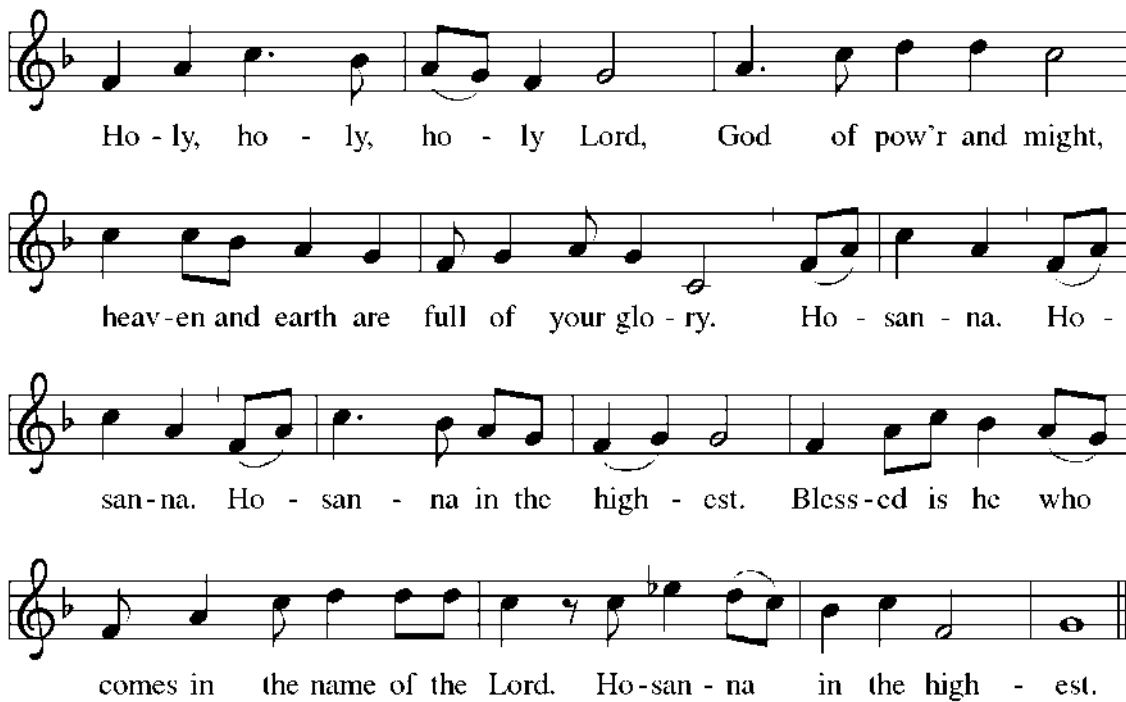
#### Great Thanksgiving



*The presiding minister continues:*

P 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, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin; who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD**



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

## **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

*The Pastor leads us in the Words of Institution (Not Printed)  
Please direct your attention to the altar.*

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**P** Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C** **Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

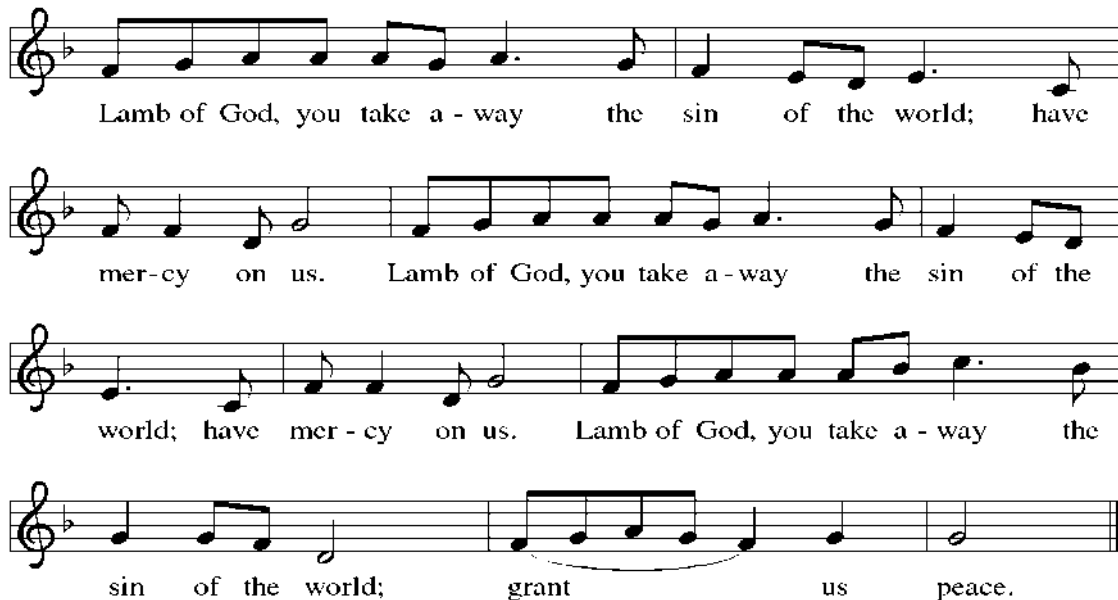
**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P The Gifts of God for the People of God.

C Thanks be to God.



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.

## WE RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

### Communion Distribution

*Please be seated. All who celebrate with us the presence of the risen Christ in Holy Communion are invited to join us for this sacrament. We receive communion at the communion rail. Please remain seated until the ushers invite you to commune by pew. When you come forward, please return to your seat by the outside aisle. Children are invited for a blessing.*

*If you would like to communion brought to you in your pew, please notify an usher.*



## **Communion Hymns**

**ELW 640 “Our Father By Whose Name”**

**ELW 789 “Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us”**

## **Communion Blessing**

**P** May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace.


**C Amen.**

## **Communion Prayer**

**P** Let us pray.

**C** **Shepherding God, you have prepared a table before us and nourished us with your love. Send us forth from this banquet to proclaim your goodness and share the abundant mercy of Jesus, our redeemer and friend. Amen.**

## **WE ARE SENT** **BENEDICTION**

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you  peace.

**C Amen**

## Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love



Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love, show



us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you.



- 1 Kneels at the feet of his friends, si - lent - ly wash - es their feet,
- 2 Neigh-bors are wealth-y and poor, var - ied in col - or and race,
- 3 These are the ones we will serve, these are the ones we will love;
- 4 Kneel at the feet of our friends, si - lent - ly wash - ing their feet:



mas - ter who acts as a slave to them.  
 neigh-bors are near - by and far a - way.  
 all these are neigh - bors to us and you.  
 this is the way we will live with you.

Text: Tom Colvin, 1925–2000, alt.

Music: CHEREPONI, Ghanaian folk tune, adapt. Tom Colvin

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## DISMISSAL

P Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

P The God of resurrection power, the Christ of unending joy, and the Spirit of Easter hope + bless you now and always.

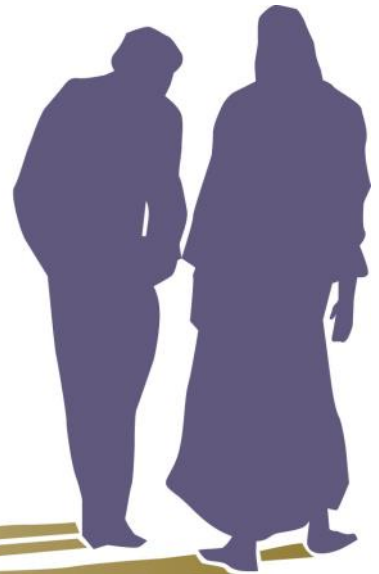
C **Amen.**

P Alleluia! Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

C **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

### Statement of Purpose

As servants of Christ, we are called to proclaim God's saving Word in a caring, nurturing way, to spread God's love throughout our community, and to provide opportunities for people to grow in Christ.



# The Fourth Sunday of Easter — April 21, 2024

## Always Room for One More

When Jesus says “I am” in the Gospel of John, he unlocks a new perspective on his love. In today’s reading, when Jesus declares, “I am the good shepherd,” we can imagine our Lord caring for us and guiding us. We picture ourselves as his sheep. It’s reassuring to hear that we aren’t alone to navigate the dangers and challenges of this world. We have a loving shepherd who is looking out for us.

Jesus loves us so much that he goes above and beyond the shepherd’s role as a caretaker. He gives up his own life so our sins can be forgiven and we can receive eternal life. That’s what being a good shepherd means—having such a close relationship with the sheep that the shepherd will stop at nothing to protect them. The shepherd will lay down his own life so his sheep can have life.

When we hear Jesus’ promise to be our good shepherd, we must not miss his commitment to gather up the sheep that aren’t yet part of his flock. They, too, will listen to Jesus’ voice. Responding to his loving call, they will become part of the one flock that follows Jesus as their good shepherd, their Savior, and their Lord. No matter how many sheep are already jostling for space, there is always room for one more. Just like there is always room at our holy communion table for one more person to eat the bread, drink the wine, and receive the gifts of God’s mercy and grace. We can always squeeze closer to the sheep around us to let one or more sheep enter Jesus’ flock, thankful that the flock is growing and that we get to listen to the loving voice of our good shepherd, together.

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