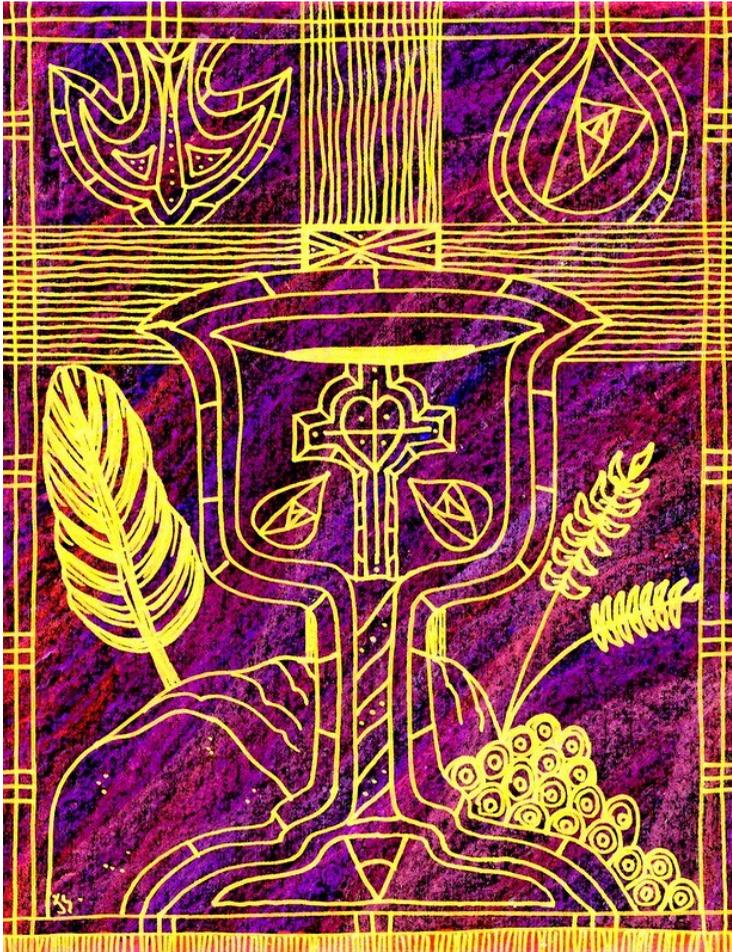




**Christ  
Lutheran**  
CHURCH

2610 Campbell Street • Valparaiso,  
Indiana 46385 • (219) 462-6660  
clcvalpo.org • office@clcvalpo.org



**MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**April 6, 2023**

**7:00 p.m.**

*This evening our Lenten observance comes to an end, and we gather with Christians around the world to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection. Tonight we remember Christ's last meal with his disciples, but the central focus is his commandment that we live out the promise embodied in this meal. As Jesus washed his disciples' feet, so we are called to give and receive love in humble service to one another. Formed into a new body in Christ through this holy meal, we are transformed by the mercy we have received and carry it into the world. Departing worship in solemn silence, we anticipate the coming days.*

## PRELUDE

*Jesus, I Will Ponder Now*

Below

## WELCOME

*If you are worshipping with us via livestream, consider **preparing your space for Communion**: light a candle (if appropriate and safe), and have a plate with bread/cracker/tortilla and a cup for wine or grape juice (or an empty cup as a sign Jesus is sufficient in one or both elements).*

## READING: MATTHEW 23: 37-39

[Jesus said,] <sup>37</sup>Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>38</sup>See, your house is left to you, desolate. <sup>39</sup>For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"



GATHERING HYMN #566

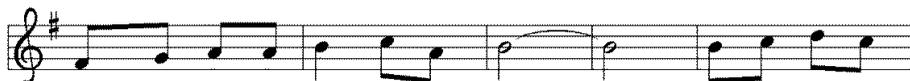
*When Twilight Comes*



1 When twi-light comes and the sun sets, moth - er hen pre-pares for  
 2 One day the Rab - bi, Lord Je - sus, called the twelve to share his  
 3 So gath-er round once a - gain, friends, touched by fad - ing glow of



night's rest. As her brood shel-ters un - der her wings, she  
 last meal. As the hen tends her young, so for them he  
 sun's gold, and re - count all our frail hu - man hopes: the



gives the love of God to her nest. Oh! what joy to  
 spent him - self to seek and to heal. Oh! what joy to  
 dreams of young and sto - ries of old. Oh! what joy to



feel her warm heart - beat and be near her all night long;  
 be with Christ Je - sus, hear his voice, oh! sheer de - light,  
 pray close to - geth - er, kneel-ing as one fam - i - ly,



so the young can find re - pose, then re - new to - mor - row's song.  
 and re - ceive his ser - vant care: all be - fore the com - ing night.  
 by a moth - er's love em - braced in the bless-ed Trin - i - ty.

**READING: MATTHEW 26:1-16**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

<sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup>and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. <sup>5</sup>But they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

<sup>6</sup>Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup>a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. <sup>8</sup>But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." <sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the

woman? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>11</sup>For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup>By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. <sup>13</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

<sup>14</sup>Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup>and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup>And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in loving one another and entrusting ourselves to God. Grant that our love may not grow cold in your service, and that we may not fail or deny you in the time of trial, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **THE UPPER ROOM**

#### **READING: JOHN 13:1-17, 31b-35**

<sup>1</sup>Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup>got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. <sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." <sup>8</sup>Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

<sup>12</sup>After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

<sup>31b</sup>“Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup>Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

## HYMN

### *A New Commandment (sung 2x)*



A new com-mand-ment I give un - to you, that you love one an - oth-er as



I have loved you, that you love one an - oth-er as I have loved you.



By this shall peo-ple know you are my dis - ci - ples, if



you have love one for an - oth - er; by this shall peo-ple know



you are my dis - ci - ples: if you have love one for an - oth - er.

Text: John 13:34-35

Music: NEW COMMANDMENT, anonymous

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## PASSOVER, THE LAST SUPPER

### **READING: EXODUS 12: 1-4, 11-14**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup>If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. <sup>11</sup>This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. <sup>14</sup>This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

### **READING: MATTHEW 26: 17-25**

<sup>17</sup>On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" <sup>18</sup>He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" <sup>19</sup>So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>20</sup>When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; <sup>21</sup>and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." <sup>22</sup>And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" <sup>23</sup>He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. <sup>24</sup>The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." <sup>25</sup>Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

### **DIALOGUE**

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 to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

## **I CORINTHIANS 11: 23-26**

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup>In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

## **DISTRIBUTION**

*Holy Communion is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.*

*The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:*

The body of Christ, given for you.

**Amen (receive the bread)**

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**Amen (receive the cup)**

**In-person distribution:** When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. **WINE** is lighter-colored and **GRAPE JUICE** is dark; they are received via individual cups in the trays. **USED GLASSES** are placed in the basket located near the ramp. **GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE**, please indicate to the server that you require this.

## COMMUNION ANTHEM

*In Remembrance*

Red

*In remembrance of me, eat this bread, in remembrance of me, drink this wine. In remembrance of me, pray for the time when God's own will is done. In remembrance of me, heal the sick, in remembrance of me, feed the poor. In remembrance of me, open the door and let your loved ones in. Take, eat, and be comforted, drink, and remember too, that this is my body and precious blood shed for you. In remembrance of me, search for truth, in remembrance of me, always love. In remembrance of me, don't look above, but in your heart for God. Do this in remembrance of me.*

*After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands as the minister continues.*  
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.  
**Amen.**

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus, in a wonderful sacrament  
you strengthen us with the saving power  
of your suffering, death, and resurrection.  
May this sacrament of your body and blood  
so work in us that the fruits of your redemption  
will show forth in the way we live,  
for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## READING: MATTHEW 26: 31-35

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

<sup>32</sup>But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." <sup>33</sup>Peter said to him, "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you." <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." <sup>35</sup>Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.

## CONFESSION

Friends in Christ, in this Lenten season we have heard our Lord's call to struggle against sin, death, and the devil—all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were called at baptism.

Within the community of the church, God never wearies of forgiving sin and giving the peace of reconciliation. On this night let us confess our denial of Christ, our sin against God and our neighbor.

*The assembly stands.*

Most merciful God,  
**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.**

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**

*The assembly is seated. People may come forward to the altar rail and kneel for the laying on of hands—come as you feel moved, the ushers will not dismiss you.*

In obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.

*The person may respond* **Amen.**



1. My song is love un - known, My  
 2. He came from his blest throne, Sal -  
 3. Some - times they strew his way And  
 4. Why, what has my Lord done? What  
 5. They rise and needs will have My  
 6. In life, no house, no home My  
 7. Here might I stay and sing, No



Sav - ior's love for me, Love to the love - less  
 va - tion to be - stow, But all made strange, and  
 his sweet prais - es sing, Re - sound - ing all the  
 makes this rage and spite? He made the lame to  
 dear Lord made a - way; A mur - der - er they  
 Lord on earth might have; In death, no friend - ly  
 sto - ry so di - vine; Nev - er was love, dear



shown That they might love - ly be. O  
 none The longed - for Christ would know. But  
 day Ho - san - nas to their King. Then  
 run, He gave the blind their sight. Sweet  
 save: The prince of life they slay. Yet  
 tomb But what a stran - ger gave. What  
 King, Nev - er was grief like thine. This



who am I That for my sake My  
 O my friend, My friend in - deed, Who  
 "Cru - ci - fy!" Is all they breathe, And  
 in - jur - ies! Yet they at these Them -  
 cheer - ful he To suf - f'ring goes, That  
 may I say? Heav'n was his home; But  
 is my friend, In whose sweet praise I



Lord shall take Frail flesh, and die?  
 at my need His life did spend.  
 for his death They thirst and cry.  
 selves dis - please, And 'gainst him rise.  
 he his foes, From thence might free.  
 mine the tomb Where - in he lay.  
 all my days Could glad - ly spend.

## THE GARDEN

### **READING: MATTHEW 26: 36-46**

<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup>He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. <sup>38</sup>Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." <sup>39</sup>And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." <sup>40</sup>Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? <sup>41</sup>Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." <sup>42</sup>Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." <sup>43</sup>Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup>So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. <sup>45</sup>Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup>Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

### **PRAYER OF LAMENT**

Gracious God, by and night we pour out our prayer to you.

We are crying out for justice, yearning for what is right, longing for your peace. Come quickly to help us, O God; save those who call upon your name.

Experiencing times of uncertainty; in the pain of anxious lives; in compassion for all who are suffering; in sorrow for all that has been lost,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Knowing that we have neglected to care for others and have prioritized satisfying our wants over meeting the needs of our neighbors,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Seeing the how these times have led to further division, suspicion, and distrust,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Knowing the continuation of distant war that destroys lives, homes, and futures,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Hearing of hateful violence and senseless killing again and again in our communities,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Recognizing patterns of privilege and systems of discrimination,

**We are deeply grieved.**

Seeing your creation destroyed by carelessness and greed,

**We are deeply grieved.**

*Time for personal reflection.*

...with all these sorrows spoken and with those that we carry in our hearts,

**We are deeply grieved.**

We entrust all our griefs and fears into your tender keeping, O God. As Jesus shared our human sorrow and suffering, give us a share of his trust, to say with him, "your will be done."

**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.**

### **THE ARREST**

#### **READING: MATTHEW 26: 47-56**

<sup>47</sup>While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. <sup>48</sup>Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." <sup>49</sup>At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>50</sup>Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. <sup>51</sup>Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. <sup>52</sup>Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup>But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?" <sup>55</sup>At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. <sup>56</sup>But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

#### **STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR**

*The service concludes with the stripping of the worship space. The symbolic elements, vestments, banners, and books are removed from the worship space, echoing Jesus' humiliation by his captors after his arrest on Thursday night. Psalm 22 is chanted.*

## PSALM 22

<sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

<sup>2</sup>O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.

<sup>3</sup>Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.

<sup>5</sup>To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

<sup>6</sup>But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup>All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

<sup>8</sup>"Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver —  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

<sup>9</sup>Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.

<sup>10</sup>On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

<sup>11</sup>Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.

<sup>12</sup>Many bulls encircle me,  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

<sup>13</sup>they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.

<sup>14</sup>I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;

<sup>15</sup>my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.

<sup>16</sup>For dogs are all around me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shriveled;

<sup>17</sup>I can count all my bones.

They stare and gloat over me;

<sup>18</sup>they divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.

<sup>19</sup>But you, O LORD, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!  
<sup>20</sup>Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my life from the power of the dog!  
<sup>21</sup>Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.  
<sup>22</sup>I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
<sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
<sup>24</sup>For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.  
<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.  
<sup>26</sup>The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
May your hearts live forever!  
<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.  
<sup>28</sup>For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.  
<sup>29</sup>To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and I shall live for him.  
<sup>30</sup>Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the LORD,  
<sup>31</sup>and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.

*The service ends in silence.*

## *Service Notes*

Readers: Phil McGuire  
Sara Long

Communion Assistants: Sara Long  
Tim Malchow

Ushers: Isabel Ecklund-Baker  
Magdalena Gibson-Even

Lights/Sound:

Livestream Tech: Tony Reinhold

Pastors: Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr.  
Rev. Erica Gibson-Even

Director of Music Ministries: Brian Bartusch

Worship Participants: Sanctuary Choir  
Lois Felten, flute  
Adam Gibson-Even, cantor

## **HOLY WEEK**

**Good Friday** (April 7) - 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.  
*Candlelight prayer service around the cross.*

**All-ages Easter Vigil on Saturday** (April 8) - 4:00 p.m.  
*We keep the ancient tradition, in a family-friendly way. Gather around the fire to hear the stories of God's saving love through the ages, remember the gift of Baptism, and hear the Easter story as we gather around Christ's table.*

**Easter Sunday** - 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. (pre-service music begins at 7:50 a.m. and 10:20 a.m.). Easter Egg Hunt begins at 12:00 p.m.  
*Festival worship services to celebrate the Resurrection! Come celebrate the risen Christ.*

### Easter Egg Hunt

12:00– Pre-k & k (near the Memorial Garden)  
12:10– 1st– 4th grade (out in the field)  
12:15– 5th-8th grade (in the woods)

## **It's All about Love**

On the night before he is killed, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment: to love one another as he has loved them. Before Jesus speaks these words, he shows the disciples what this love looks like and feels like. With a basin and a towel, he bends down and kneels before them, one by one. Stooping low, he cradles their dirty, smelly feet in his hands, washing them with tenderness and care.

Jesus does all this knowing what is to come—he will soon be betrayed, be killed, and rise again. Knowing that the disciples will be shaken to the core as they enter the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus chooses to take the time to silently care for them.

Tonight we are reminded that the love of Christ is the lifeblood of Christian community. We lovingly and vulnerably step into these ritual practices of serving one another in the ways that Jesus taught us on the night when he was betrayed. We wash one another's feet, and we serve one another the bread and wine of holy communion. In our awkwardness and care, in our washing and eating, in our giving and receiving, we can trust that God's grace flows among and through us. We are united as one body, sharing in the servant way of Jesus.

Christian community isn't defined by how great our programs are, how thoughtful our worship is, the brilliance of our preaching, or the quality of our music. All of these things are valuable, to be sure, insofar as they put us in touch with the unconditional love of God and inspire, encourage, and strengthen our will to love each other as Jesus loves us. As we walk through the valleys of the shadow of death in our lives and in the life of our world, we can hold on to what Jesus shows and teaches us on this night: it's all about love.

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