

REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH
Serving Absecon - Galloway Township
Rev. Heidi Link – Pastor
Brian Conover - Music Director

Sunday, March 15th, 2026
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT / 8:30 & 10:00 AM

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

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

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain the living water

Christ offers:

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

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. **Amen.**

* OPENING SONG

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
5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright



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
shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to



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.
sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5
Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

* GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

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. **Amen**

FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

16 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.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 23

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 beside 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.**

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.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

8 for 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.”

LIGHTING OF THE “CROWN OF THORNS” WREATH (CANDLES 1,2, 3 & 4)

The journey to Easter can be a time to find what is missing in our lives; a time to deliberately seek what has been tossed away, misplaced, or ignored so that our lives can once again reflect the Gospel which Jesus encouraged us to live.

It is a time to deeply consider the purpose and gift of God’s son, remember what he held dear, and to recognize *anew* how he re-found all of us through his death and resurrection.

Let us pray together:

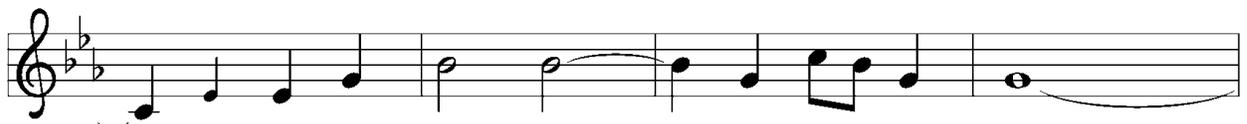
Heavenly Father, throughout these forty days, unseal within us the wellspring of your grace, cleanse our hearts of all that is not holy, and cause your gift of new life to flourish once again. Amen.

* SONG OF PRAISE

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me



1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;
2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



I want Je - sus to walk with me;
in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
when my heart is al - most break - ing,
when my head is bowed in sor - row,



Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

*** THE WORD OF GOD: John 9:1-41**

A reading from the Gospel of St. John:

9 As he 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.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

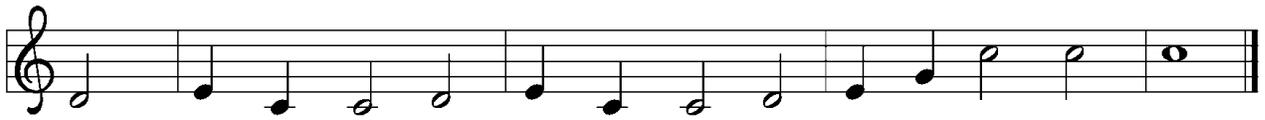
The Lord's My Shepherd



1 The Lord's my shep-herd; I'll not want. He makes me down to lie
2 My soul he doth re-store a-gain, and me to walk doth make
3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear no ill;
4 My ta-ble thou hast rich-ly spread in pres-ence of my foes;
5 Good-ness and mer-cy all my life shall sure-ly fol-low me,



in pas-tures green; he lead-eth me the qui-et wa-ters by.
with-in the paths of righ-teous-ness, e'en for his own name's sake;
for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff me com-fort still;
my head thou dost with oil a-noint, and my cup o-ver-flows.
and in God's house for-ev-er-more my dwell-ing-place shall be;



He lead-eth me, he lead-eth me the qui-et wa-ters by.
with-in the paths of righ-teous-ness, e'en for his own name's sake.
for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff me com-fort still.
My head thou dost with oil a-noint, and my cup o-ver-flows.
and in God's house for-ev-er-more my dwell-ing-place shall be.

Text: *The Psalms of David in Meeter*, Edinburgh, 1650
Music: BROTHER JAMES' AIR, James L. Macbeth Bain

* APOSTLE'S 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

PAGE 6

* PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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

A brief silence.

God, our shepherd, we pray that you guide the church. Lead Christians in our community (*here local congregations may be named*) and across the globe (*here international companion churches and synods may be named*) in right paths for your name's sake. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God our provider, we cry out for this planet and the life it holds. Rescue endangered animals and plants, preserve threatened ecosystems, and save creatures from natural disasters. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God our sovereign, we plead for your peace on earth. Bring an end to war and violence, and raise up leaders in governments, courts, businesses, schools, and community organizations who seek goodness and mercy. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God our healer, we call to you in our need. Uplift all who are made to feel unimportant, and transform the hearts of all infected by bigotry and prejudice. Care for all in special need this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God our friend, we praise you for the diversity of people among us. Awaken us to share and receive the gifts we each possess, and stir up a spirit of understanding, celebration, and welcome for all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God our home, we thank you for all who have died and completed their baptismal journeys. Grant us faith to live until we too dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

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

Amen.

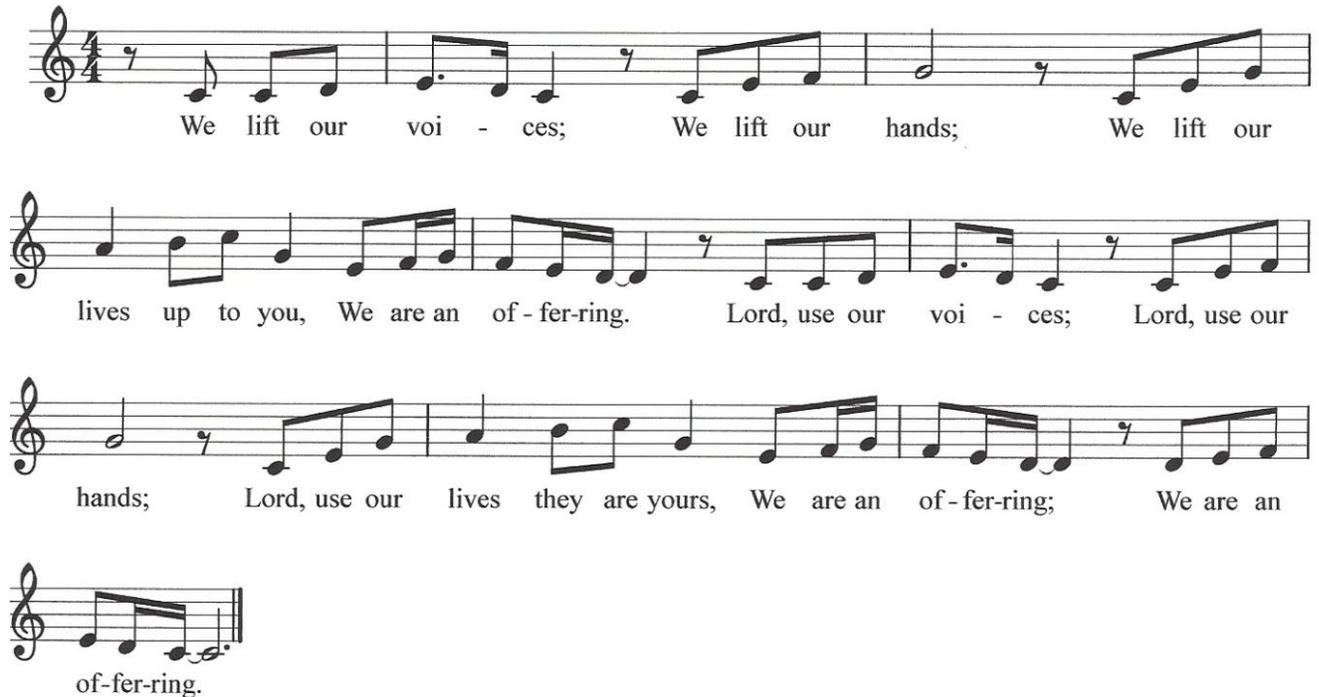
*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING / SPECIAL MUSIC

* OFFERING SONG



We lift our voi - ces; We lift our hands; We lift our
lives up to you, We are an of - fer-ring. Lord, use our voi - ces; Lord, use our
hands; Lord, use our lives they are yours, We are an of - fer-ring; We are an
of - fer-ring.

* OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray: 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.**

* THE 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.

It is indeed right and salutary...*(Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the day or season, concluding:)* 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.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

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

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Amen.

*** THE 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**

Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy. **We come.**

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

(BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS who believe that the risen Christ is present in the Eucharist to forgive sin and renew life are invited to either come to the altar area for communion as directed or share at your pew. If you come forward, you will receive the elements. If you choose to receive at your seat, please remain there, kneel as you are able, and receive the elements using the communion packets available from the ushers. If there are other special needs, please speak to an usher.)

*** POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

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

Amen

*** POST COMMUNION SONG**

Go, My Children, with My Blessing

3 "Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour-ished, clos - er to me.
Grow in love and love by serv - ing, joy - ful and free.
Here my Spir - it's pow - er filled you, here his ten - der com - fort stilled you.
Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour - ished, joy - ful and free."

The image shows a musical score for the song "Go, My Children, with My Blessing". It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, accessible style. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics. The third staff features a more active bass line with eighth notes, while the lyrics remain. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.

*** PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

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. **Amen.**

*** BLESSING**

And now a blessing: 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. **Amen.**

*** CELEBRATIONS!!!**

*** CLOSING SONG**

Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us



1 Sav - ior like a shep-herd lead us; much we need your ten - der care.
2 We are yours; in love be - friend us, be the guard-ian of our way;
3 You have prom-ised to re - ceive us, poor and sin - ful though we be;



In your pleas-ant pas-tures feed us, for our use your fold pre-pare.
keep your flock, from sin de - fend us, seek us when we go a - stray.
you have mer - cy to re - lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.



Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.



Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, you have bought us; we are yours.
Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, hear us chil - dren when we pray.
Bless-ed Je - sus, bless-ed Je - sus, ear - ly let us turn to you.

Text: attr. Dorothy A. Thrupp, 1779–1847
Music: BRADBURY, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

*** SENDING**

Go in peace. Believe the Good News.

Thanks be to God.

*Copyright © 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS003599. New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
Revised Common Lectionary, Copyright © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts, admin Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission.*