

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

Sunday, February 22nd, 2026
THE FIRST 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 disdaining 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.**

* - Congregation Stands (If for any reason you are unable to stand during the service, please remain seated.)

* OPENING SONG

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God



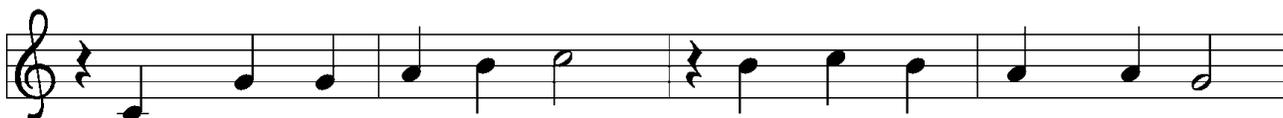
1 A might - y for - tress is our God, a sword and shield vic -
2 No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, re -
3 Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land all threat - 'ning to de -
4 God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide, no thanks to foes, who



to - rious; he breaks the cruel op - pres - sor's rod and
ject - ed. But now a cham - pion comes to fight, whom
your us, we trem - ble not, un - moved we stand; they
fear it; for God him - self fights by our side with



wins sal - va - tion glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe
God him - self e - lect - ed. You ask who this may be?
can - not o - ver - pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage;
weap - ons of the Spir - it. Were they to take our house,



has sworn to work us woe! With craft and dread - ful might
The Lord of hosts is he! Christ Je - sus, might - y Lord,
in bat - tle we'll en - gage! His might is doomed to fail;
goods, hon - or, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched a - way,



he arms him - self to fight. On earth he has no e - qual.
God's on - ly Son, a - dored. He holds the field vic - to - rious.
God's judg - ment must pre - vail! One lit - tle word sub - dues him.
they can - not win the day. The king - dom's ours for - ev - er!

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: EIN FESTE BURG, Martin Luther
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

* 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: Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

³ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE OFFERING

Refrain: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! (Repeat)

Oh, how right it is to give thanks to Him, our creator and our king;

We sing out our praise to the holy one; We rejoice, we rejoice in our God! (Repeat Refrain)

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 32

¹ Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!

² **Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

³ While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,
because of my groaning all day long.

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

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

⁶ **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**

⁷ You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

⁸ **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye.**

⁹ 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."

¹⁰ **Great are the tribulations of the wicked; but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**

¹¹ Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

SECOND READING: Romans 5:12-19

¹² Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

¹³ To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶ Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

LIGHTING OF THE "CROWN OF THORNS" ADVENT WREATH

In our world we are tempted to think that our Heavenly Father has not given us all that we need. In essence, this was the temptation that led to original sin. May we be delivered from the temptation to turn our heads to anyone other than Almighty God.

As we journey through lent, may we believe without a doubt that God has provided for all our needs. No matter how desolate the landscape of our lives may look, God has made a Way through Jesus Christ – through his death on the cross 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.

Text: African American spiritual
Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual

*** THE WORD OF GOD: Matthew 4:1-11**

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew:

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you,

and they will lift you up in their hands,
 so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

CONGREGATIONAL SONG

Out in the Wilderness



1 Driv - en by the Spir - it out in the wil - der - ness;
 2 Tempt - ed by the dev - il out in the wil - der - ness;
 3 An - gels all a - round you out in the wil - der - ness;
 4 “You are my be - lov - ed” out in the wil - der - ness.



driv - en by the Spir - it out in the wil - der - ness;
 tempt - ed by the dev - il out in the wil - der - ness;
 an - gels all a - round you out in the wil - der - ness;
 “You are my be - lov - ed” out in the wil - der - ness.



when the Spir - it says, “Go,” you can’t say, “No.”
 though you try to be strong, it’s been so long.
 you are far . . . from home where wild things roam.
 When you were . . . bap - tized, you re - a - lized



You lis - ten for the voice when you’re bend - ed low;
 He whis - pers in your ear and you know he’s wrong;
 There’s dan - ger ev - ’ry - where but you’re not a - lone;
 you’d heard the voice of God from the o - p’ning skies:



driv - en by the Spir - it out in the wil - der - ness.
 tempt - ed by the dev - il out in the wil - der - ness.
 an - gels all a - round you out in the wil - der - ness.
 “You are my be - lov - ed” out in the wil - der - ness.

*** 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

*** 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 of all grace, grant faith to your church. Give to all the baptized the will to resist temptation and to worship and serve you alone. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all creation, tend this earth. When human greed and disobedience threaten this planet and the life it contains, lead us by your Spirit into ways of reverence, awe, and gentleness. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all nations, preserve us from trouble. Surround all living in places of violence with your steadfast love and give resilience to all who work for peace. Grant courage to those who challenge, especially around issues of racism and systemic oppression. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all healing, mend our wounds. Bring wholeness to all who are sick, give peace to all who groan in grief, and send companions to all who are lonely or isolated. (*Especially we pray for . . .*) Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of all people, provide for our community. For any among us who hunger for bread, bring nourishment. For any among us who hunger for truth, speak your life-giving word. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of all life, bring us to you. We thank you for your free and abounding grace, and for those who, by that same grace, now rest eternally in you (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

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

Amen.

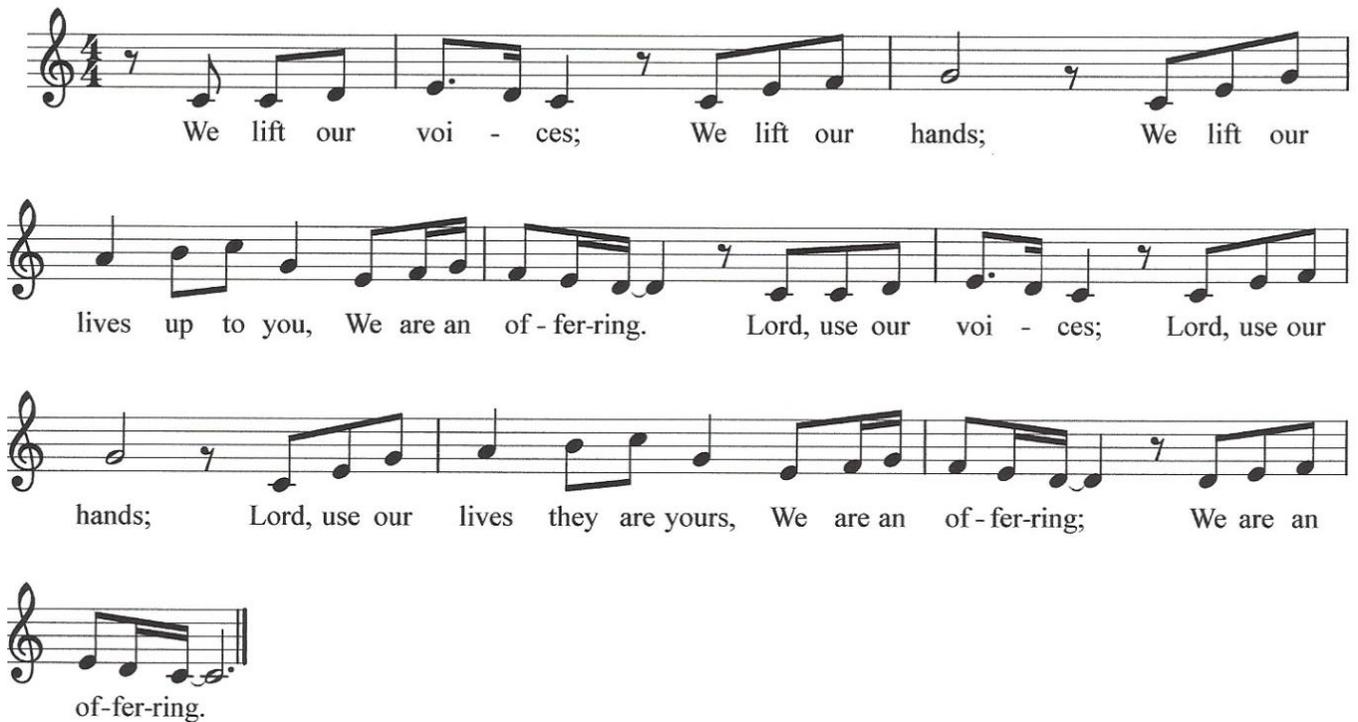
*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

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.

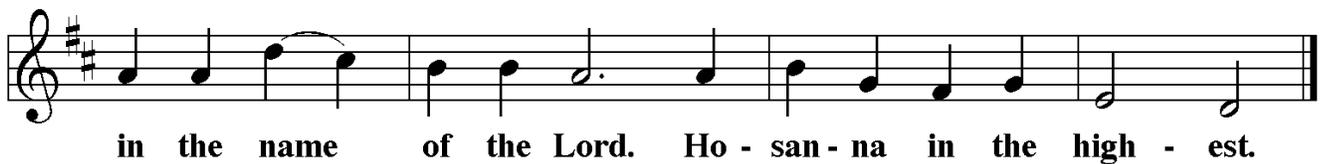
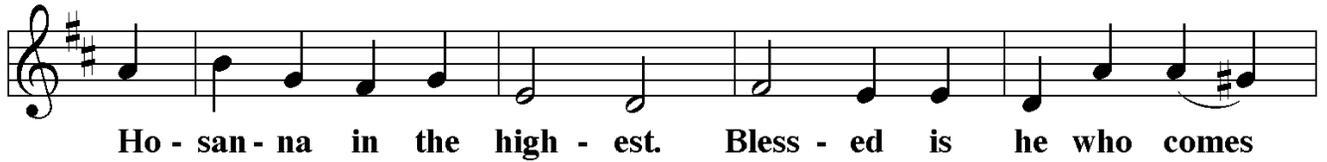
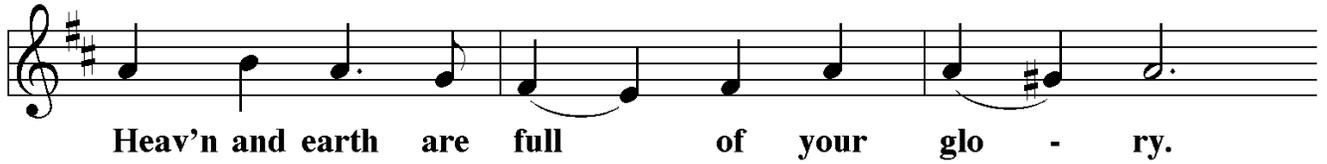
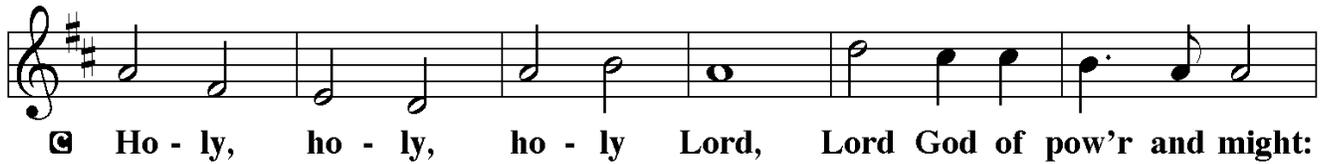
Lift up your hearts.

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:



* 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

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive. The lyrics are: "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."

*** 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**

Jesus, Still Lead On



1 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; and, al - though the
2 If the way be drear, if the foe be near, let no faith - less
3 When we seek re - lief from a long - felt grief, when temp - ta - tions
4 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; heav'n - ly lead - er,



way be cheer - less, we will fol - low, calm and fear - less;
fears o'er - take us, let not faith and hope for - sake us;
come al - lur - ing make us pa - tient and en - dur - ing;
still di - rect us, still sup - port, con - sole, pro - tect us,



guide us by your hand to the prom - ised land.
safe - ly past the foe to our home we go.
show us that bright shore where we weep no more.
till we safe - ly stand in the prom - ised land.

Text: Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf, 1700–1760; tr. Jane L. Borthwick, 1813–1897, alt.
Music: SEELENBRÄUTIGAM, Adam Drese, 1620–1701

*** 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.*