

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

**Sunday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT / 10:00 AM**

**\* CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who journeys with us these forty days, and sustains us with the gift of grace. **Amen.**

Let us acknowledge before God and one another our need for repentance and God's mercy.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Holy God,

**we confess to you our faults and failings. Too often we neglect and do not trust your holy word; we take for ourselves instead of giving to others; we spoil rather than steward your creation; we cause hurt though you call us to heal; we choose fear over compassion. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, as we seek to follow in your way of life. Amen.**

Hear the good news: God so loved the world that God gave the only Son, so that all may receive life. This promise is for you! God embraces you with divine mercy, † forgives you in Christ's name, and revives you in the Spirit's power. **Amen.**

**\* OPENING SONG**

**Baptized and Set Free**



1 We are peo - ple cre - at - ed, cho - sen by God.  
2 We are fed and we're nour - ished, filled and re - freshed.  
3 We are nour - ished by wa - ter, all liv - ing things,  
4 Now with praise and thanks - giv - ing, we join the song.



Then we're washed, ev - er gent - ly, in mer - cy and love.  
Then our hun - ger re - turns and a - gain we are blessed.  
and by life that the Spir - it a - bun - dant - ly brings.  
All are wel - come! We gath - er to sing loud and strong.

*... song continues ...*

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



Sin has pow - er no more. Je - sus o - pened the door  
For what - ev - er the need, God is great - er in - deed:  
As we jour - ney toward home, may your pres - ence be known:  
Not en - slaved, but set free! From now on, all will be



to a foun - tain bring - ing heal - ing, and whole - ness and more.  
end - less o - cean, al - ways deep - er than all of our need.  
pre - cious riv - er, ev - er - flow - ing, now car - ry us home.  
one in Je - sus, one in wa - ter, bap - tized and set free!

Text: Cathy Skogen-Soldner, b. 1956  
Music: BAPTIZED AND SET FREE, Cathy Skogen-Soldner  
Text and music © 1999 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: Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**FIRST READING: Exodus 17:1-7** (*see back of bulletin for text*)

### RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 95

<sup>1</sup>Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

<sup>2</sup>**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving  
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

<sup>3</sup>For you, LORD, are a great God,  
and a great ruler above all gods.

<sup>4</sup>**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;  
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

<sup>5</sup>The sea is yours, for you made it,  
and your hands have molded the dry land.

<sup>6</sup>**Come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

<sup>7</sup>For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

Oh, that today you would hear God's voice!

<sup>8</sup>“Harden not your hearts,  
as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert.  
<sup>9</sup>There your ancestors tested me,  
they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.  
<sup>10</sup>Forty years I loathed that generation, saying,  
‘The heart of this people goes astray; they do not know my ways.’  
<sup>11</sup>Indeed I swore in my anger,  
‘They shall never come to my rest.’”

**SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-11**

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

In the Exodus story, we read of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness and lifting up their complaints to God... of being hungry, of being thirsty, of feeling abandoned. If we are honest about our daily walk with God, we admit that we, too, are often like the Israelite. We too often lose faith in God’s goodness and in God’s providence. For the Israelites, God continued to provide for their needs... sending bread from heaven and making water spring forth from a rock.

In the same way, no matter what the wilderness may look like in our lives – a great loss that we are living through, a deep sadness that we are walking through, or unanswered questions that we are having to live with – God is faithful, God continues to provide for our needs and will never, ever abandon us.

What does this mean?

*(A child of the congregation answers, followed by our prayer.)*

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.**

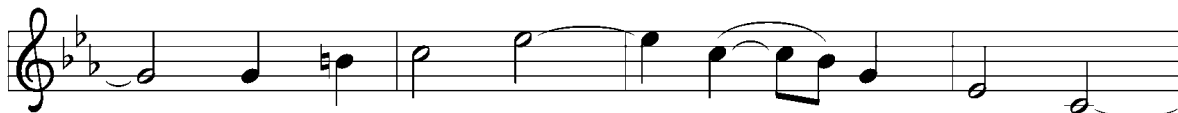
**\* HYMN OF PRAISE**

**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 4:5-42**

A reading from the Gospel of John:

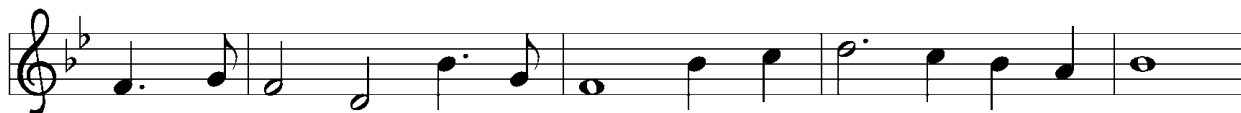
*(see back of bulletin for text)*

Word of God, Word of Life.

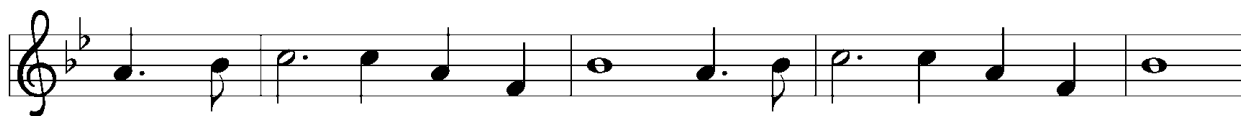
**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

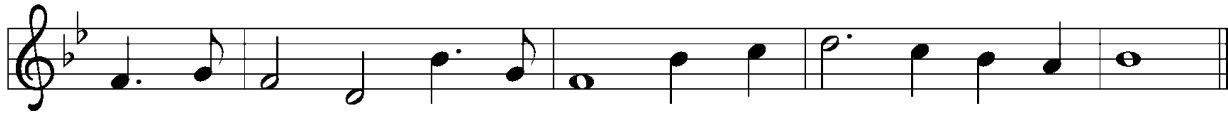
**Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me**



1 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee;  
 2 Not the la - bors of my hands can ful - fill thy law's de - mands;  
 3 Noth - ing in my hand I bring; sim - ply to thy cross I cling.  
 4 While I draw this fleet - ing breath, when mine eye - lids close in death,



let the wa - ter and the blood, from thy riv - en side which flowed,  
 could my zeal no res - pite know, could my tears for - ev - er flow,  
 Na - ked, come to thee for dress; help - less, look to thee for grace;  
 when I soar to worlds un - known, see thee on thy judg - ment throne,



be of sin the dou - ble cure; cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.  
all for sin could not a - tone; thou must save, and thou a - lone.  
foul, I to the foun - tain fly; wash me, Sav - ior, or I die.  
Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee.

Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740–1778  
Music: TOPLADY, Thomas Hastings, 1784–1872

### \* 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

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for your church. Bless partnerships with other Christians and inter-religious dialogue. Guide the daily work of denominational and congregational leaders. Strengthen our combined witness for the sake of the gospel, that all experience your life-giving love. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the universe. All creation teems with life, from the depths of the earth and seas to the skies above. Fill us with awe and reverence for the diversity and preservation of life. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world. Topple the dividing walls that separate us from our neighbors. Form us into your beloved community where diversity of gender, race, language, ability, and ethnic origin is celebrated and affirmed. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. Be present with all who are lonely, and give courage to all who are afraid. Comfort those who live with chronic illness or other sickness (*especially*). Give them your living water always. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation, especially those preparing for baptism (*at the Vigil of Easter/on Easter Day*). Nurture their faith and pour your love into their hearts. Inspire our community by their testimony to God's grace in their lives. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.  
(prayers continue...)*

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We give thanks for the lives of all your saints (*especially Gregory the Great, whom we commemorate today*). Their hope in you sustained lives of faith and service. Encourage us with the hope they shared in you. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**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: God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life. **Amen.**

**\* THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

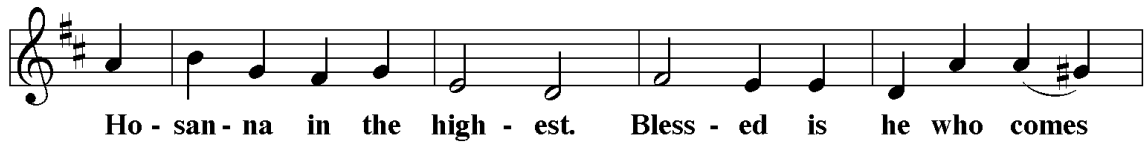
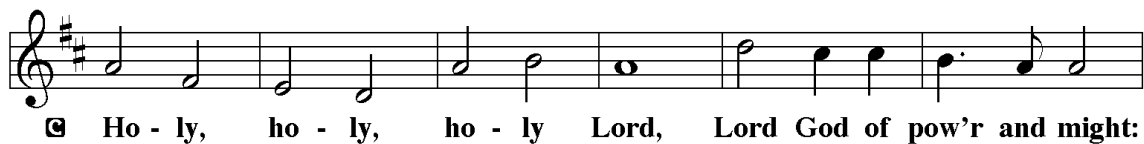
Lift up your hearts.

**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**

**\* 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 and receive Jesus, our strength in the wilderness.

**We come.**

**\*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

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

**Amen**

**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 HYMN**

**Go, My Children, with My Blessing**

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Go, My Children, with My Blessing". It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp). 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." The first staff begins with a '3' time signature. The music is written in a simple, accessible style with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

**\* PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray: Embodied God, at your table, we have tasted the goodness of Jesus. With the eyes of our hearts open to your promise, empower us to hear the needs of our neighbors and touch the world with your love. **Amen.**

**\* BLESSING**

And now a blessing: God, the giver of love, ✝ Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth bless you in this Lenten journey. **Amen.**



**\* CLOSING SONG**

**Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer**



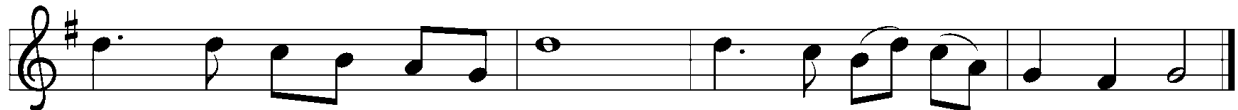
1 Guide me ev - er, great Re - deem - er, pil - grim through this  
2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain where the heal - ing  
3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious



bar - ren land. I am weak, but you are might - y; hold me  
wa - ters flow; let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar lead me  
fears sub - side; death of death and hell's de - struc - tion, land me



with your pow'r - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,  
all my jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - 'rer, strong de - liv - 'rer,  
safe on Ca - naan's side. Songs and prais - es, songs and prais - es



feed me now and ev - er - more, feed me now and ev - er - more.  
shield me with your might - y arm, shield me with your might - y arm.  
I will raise for - ev - er - more, I will raise for - ev - er - more.

Text: William Williams, 1717–1791; tr. William Williams and Peter Williams, 1722–1796, alt.  
Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1873–1932

**\* SENDING**

Go in peace. Serve in Love.

**Thanks be to God.**