

SO
MUST THE
SON OF
MAN
BE
LIFTED
UP

JOHN 3:14

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

www.stpaulsyork.org

Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com

Facebook: St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George

YouTube: St. Paul's Lutheran Church - South George St. York

WELCOME Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 188 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Offerings Offerings are received during the liturgy. They are presented along with gifts of bread and wine at the altar. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org or use the QR Code provided. During the Season of Lent our special appeal is for "God's Global Barnyard".

Postlude It is our tradition to remain seated for the postlude. If you need to leave we ask that you do so reverently. This tradition developed as a result of our livestream. We want anyone viewing to be able to listen to the postlude without unnecessary distraction. Thank you.



**Lutheran Church in York, PA - St.
Paul's Lutheran...**

stpaulsyork.org

Restrooms are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex (George St). Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms as well as in the nursery.

An AED/Defibrillator unit is located in the Good Shepherd room. It is placed on the wall left side of the Springettsbury door exit.

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Parents are asked to stay with their children. Quiet activities are also available in the Narthex for infant through preschool children to use with an adult.

Parents, please do accompany your child to the restroom during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Youth Director	Kelly Moore-Spencer	kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Children Choirs Director	Julianna Jones	jjones.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	tweikert.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 10, 2024
Holy Communion 8:00 AM & 10:30AM
Evangelical Lutheran Worship Setting 4

PRELUDE

Savior, When in Dust to You

Paul Manz

Stand turning to face the Baptismal Font

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage 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

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, 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

ENTRANCE HYMN***Give to Our God Immortal Praise! (ELW 848)***

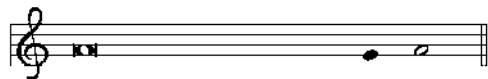
1 Give to our God im - mor - tal praise! Mer - cy and
2 He sent his Son with pow'r to save from guilt and
3 Give to the Lord of lords re - nown; the King of

truth are all his ways. Won - ders of grace to
dark - ness and the grave. Won - ders of grace to
kings with glo - ry crown. His mer - cies ev - er

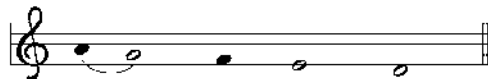
God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.
God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.
shall en - dure when lords and kings are known no more!

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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.**

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

Continued on next page...



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



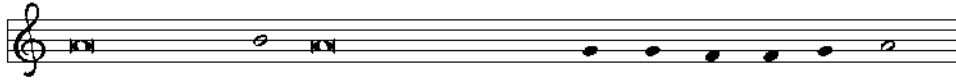
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 wor-ship and praise,



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



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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray....God of all mercy, by your power to heal and to forgive, graciously cleanse us from all sin and make us strong; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever **Amen**

Sit

CHILDRENS' SERMON

FIRST READING Numbers 21:4-9 (back page)

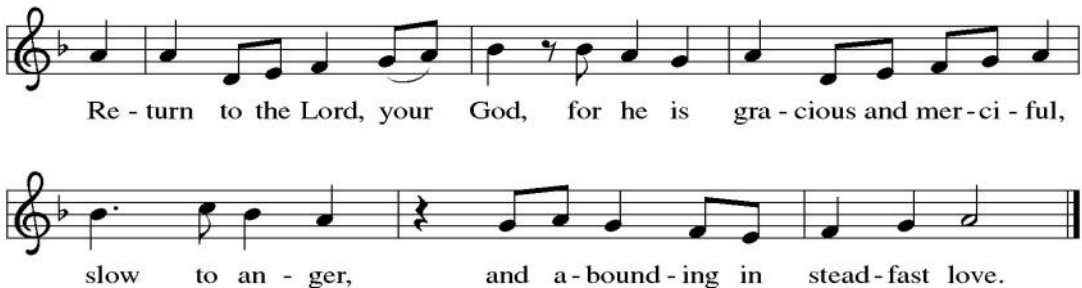
PSALMODY Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 *spoken responsively*

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for | he is good,*
and his mercy en- | dures forever.
- ² **Let all those whom the LORD has re- | deemed proclaim***
that he redeemed them from the hand | of the foe.
- ³ He gathered them out | of the lands;*
from the east and from the west, from the north and | from the south.
- ¹⁷ **Some were fools and took to re- | bellious ways;***
they were afflicted because | of their sins.
- ¹⁸ They abhorred all man- | ner of food*
and drew near | to death's door.
- ¹⁹ **Then they cried to the LORD | in their trouble,***
and he delivered them from | their distress.
- ²⁰ He sent forth his | word and healed them*
and saved them | from the grave.
- ²¹ **Let them give thanks to the LORD | for his mercy***
and the wonders he does | for his children.
- ²² Let them offer a sacrifice | of thanksgiving*
and tell of his acts with | shouts of joy.

SECOND READING Ephesians 2:1-10 (back page)

Stand

VERSE Sung by all



HOLY GOSPEL John 3:14-21 (back page)

The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

Pastor Reep

Stand

NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**
**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.**
Through him all things were made.
**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin
Mary, and was made man.**
**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**
**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**
**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**
**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, give vision to the global church and foster cooperation in mission. Increase inter-religious understanding and ecumenical dialog. Make your church a sanctuary for all fleeing persecution, disaster, and war (*areas in crisis may be named*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restore balance to the earth's fragile habitats. Preserve wilderness lands, rainforests, and wildlife. Cleanse oceans and rivers (*local water sources may be named*). Make us good stewards of the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We give thanks for those who courageously witness to your liberating love (*especially Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, renewers of society, whom we commemorate today*).

Free all people from the evils of racism, religious strife, and hatred. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Care tenderly for all whose loved ones perished from pandemic disease in every nation. Strengthen health care workers, first responders, and caregivers. Relieve all who live with chronic illness and pain. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Open our hearts and minds to deeper understandings of our faith. Deepen our love for you and for one another. Teach us to pray for our enemies. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for your promise that those who die in the faith are made alive in Christ. Comfort us with this promise knowing that we also will be raised to newness of life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The ministers and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Sit

OFFERING

8:00 AM

Litany

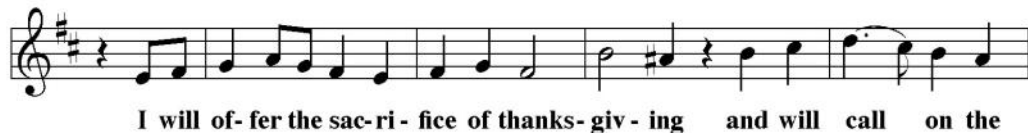
Rosalie Bonighton

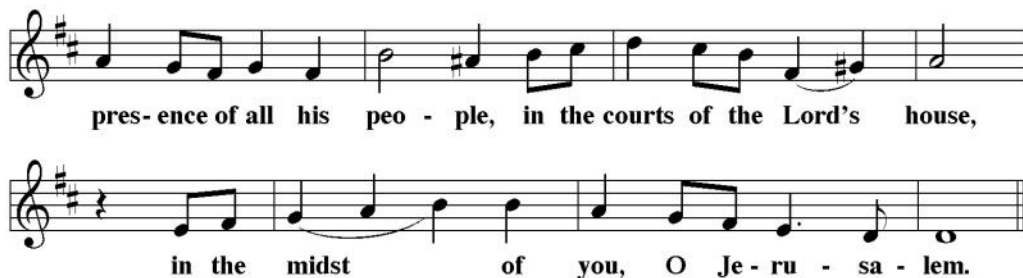
10:30 AM

God So Loved the World

John Goss

OFFERTORY



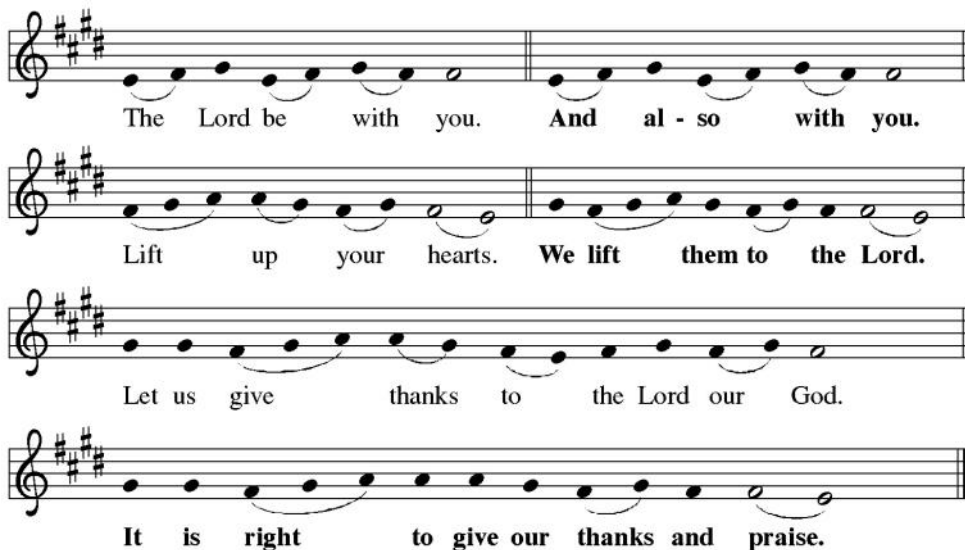


OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Blessed are you,

O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.


DIALOGUE *Sung by Pastor and congregation*



PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is sung.*

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. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS *Sung by all.*



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.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.

Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.

Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.

Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness
to the land of milk and honey.

Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.

Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.

Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the 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 for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

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

O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With [name/s and] your holy ones of all times and places,
with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God,
blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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**

FRACTION RITE *A brief silence is kept.*

AGNUS DEI *Sung by all.*



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, grant us peace.

Sit *The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Communion.*

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

Our Communion is “open” to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle (about 10 adults per side).*
- 2. Communion glasses are on credence tables at the front pews (left and right side).*
- 3. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.*
- 4. Take your place along the chancel step. The ministers will bring the bread & wine to you.*
- 5. Extend your hands to receive the communion bread.*
- 6. Consume the communion bread.*
- 7. Hold the communion glass with both hands at chest height so that the communion assistant can easily pour the wine into the glass.*
- 8. Consume the wine before you leave the chancel edge.*
- 9. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.*
- 10. Return to your pew using the side aisle.*

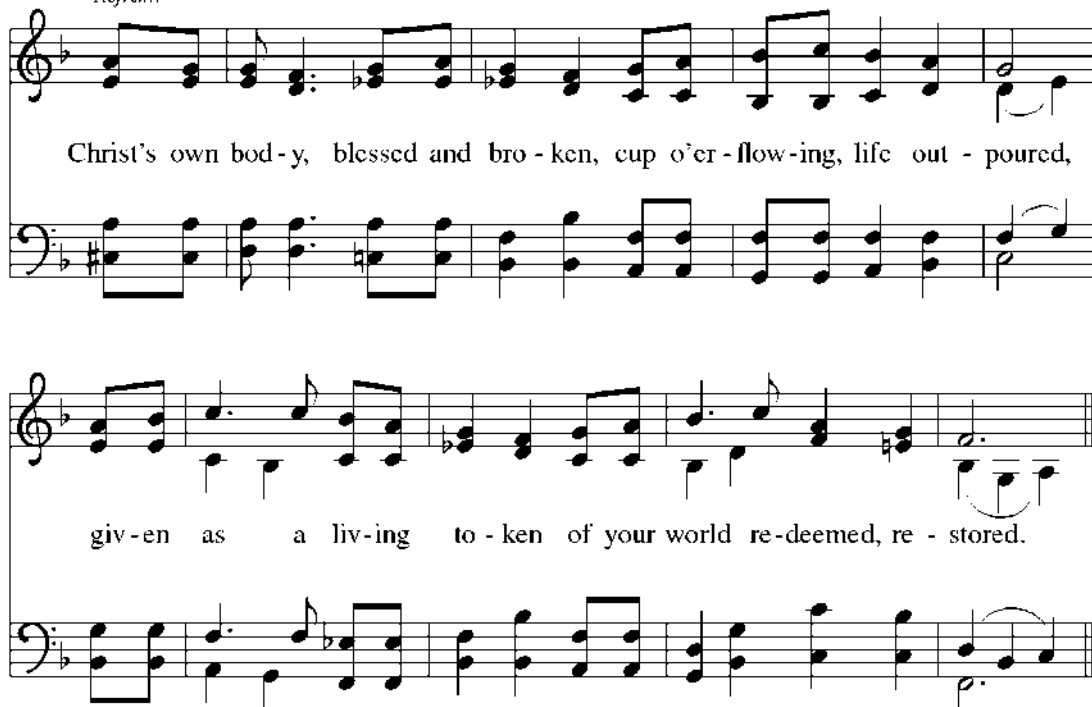
COMMUNION HYMN *By Your Hand You Feed Your People (ELW 469)*



1 By your hand you feed your peo - ple, food of an - gels, heav-en's bread.
2 In this meal we taste your sweet-ness, bread for hun - ger, wine of peace.
3 Send us now with faith and cour - age to the hun - gry, lost, be - reaved.

For these gifts we did not la - bor, by your grace have we been fed:
Ho - ly word and ho - ly wis - dom sat - is - fy our deep - est needs.
In our liv - ing and our dy - ing, we be - come what we re - ceive:

Refrain



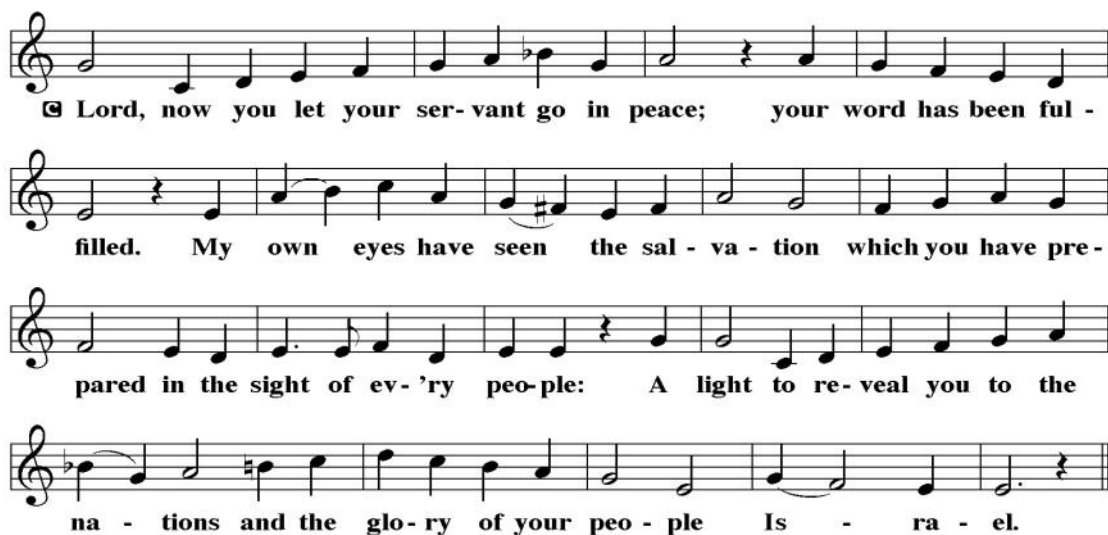
Christ's own bod-y, blessed and bro - ken, cup o'er - flow - ing, life out - poured,
giv - en as a liv - ing to - ken of your world re - deemed, re - stored.

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

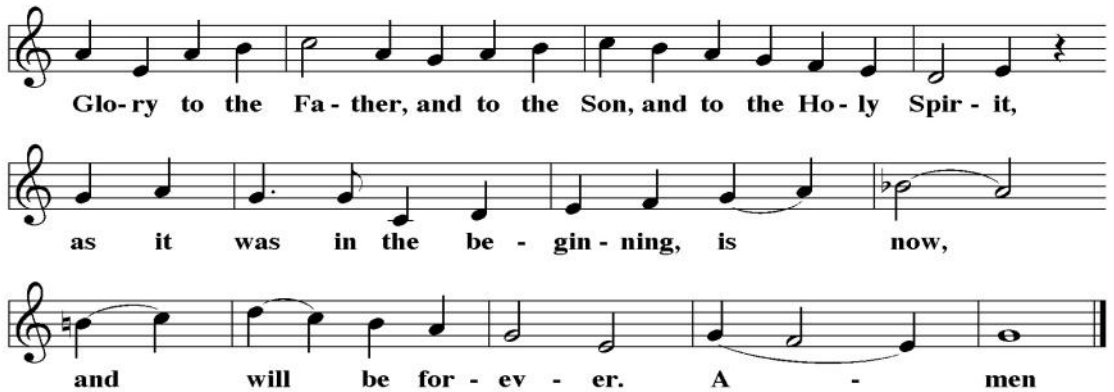
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen**

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



☞ Lord, now you let your ser - vant go in peace; your word has been ful -
filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre -
pared in the sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: A light to re - veal you to the
na - tions and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.

Continued on next page...



POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Almighty God, you gave your Son both as a sacrifice for sin and a model of the godly life. Enable us to receive him always with thanksgiving, and to conform our lives to his; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The people remain standing until the minister and servers exit the nave.

POSTLUDE *O Dearest Jesus, What Law hast Thou Broken* Balint Karosi

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Lenten Worship

Sundays 8:00 & 10:30 AM

New Members Class	9:15 AM	Good Shepherd Room
The Psalms	9:15 AM	Christ Hall



Wednesdays

6:00 PM	Supper	Christ Hall
7:00 PM	Vespers	Nave



March 24	Palm/Passion Sunday Handbells, Brass, Organ	Combined liturgy	9:15 AM
March 25	York Conference Vespers Combined Conference Choir	Hosted by St. Paul's	7:00 PM
March 28	Maundy Thursday Foot washing/Stripping of Altar Cello Trio		7:00 PM
March 29	Good Friday Reproaches of the Cross		7:00 PM
March 30	The Vigil of Easter With Sacrament of Holy Baptism		7:00 PM
March 31	The Resurrection of Our Lord Organ, Trumpets, Piano Duet	Combined liturgy	9:15 AM

Wednesday Mid-Week - During the Wednesdays in Lent a simple supper of soup and bread will be held in Christ Hall at 6:00 PM. Following the supper Evening Prayer, Vespers, will be held in the church nave at 7:00 PM. We have invited the congregations of Grace, St. Peter's and Christ Manchester to join us for all or part of the evening. For those who cannot join in person please do join us through the live stream at 7:00 PM.

Lenten Mid-week Offering—God's Global Barnyard—The offerings from the mid-week Lenten services are designated for God's Global Barnyard, a project undertaken by the elementary Sunday school classes. Donations may be made by using your Lenten envelope provided in the packet, by marking a special white color envelope located in the pew rack "Barnyard" and placing it in the offering basin, or through the website by using the Donate Now designation for God's Global Barnyard. The children look forward to totaling all of the offerings and then with a dollar amount in hand beginning the hard work of figuring out what animals to purchase to help a family or families in a developing nation.

The Lutheran Men's Club of York sponsors Wednesday morning Lenten Devotions **for men and women** during breakfast at the Lyndon Diner on Rt. 30. The time of fellowship is provided for both men and women and calls upon pastors from the York area to led the devotional. The start time is 7:30 AM, however, many folks arrive a bit early to share in conversation. Participants order from the menu and are responsible for the cost of their breakfast. Reservations are not needed. Presenters for the month of March are:

Mar 13 - Rev Katherine Brantner - Pastor with St. Paul - Hametown

Mar 20 - Rev Andrew Berdahl, Associate Pastor, Advent Lutheran Church

Mar 27 - Rev Thomas McKee - Retired Pastor. He will administer the Sacrament.

Tanzania Mission Trip—The group of travelers divides into 4 groups reflecting; Youth, Medical, Educational, and Pastoral Concerns. The children and youth plan to engage with peers learning of similarities and differences in growing up in a Christian community. Those interested in medical care, the new hospital being built in Matayma, and local health clinics will engage with health care professionals. Those who share a passion for education, especially music, will learn educational approaches as well as the enrichment of music. Lastly, others will learn of the work of the local congregation, Mpuguso Lutheran Church, and the Konde Diocese. Please know that the costs associated with the trip have escalated since planning began a year ago. Please do give a gift to help offset the enormous expense of the mission trip. You may do so through a "special" envelope located in the pew rack and marking it "Tanzania". Thank you!

Below are our Mission Trip Travelers:

Kesetbrhan Keleta	Ezra Ericson	Anna Herdson	Elizabeth Mitchell
Stan Reep	Iris Ericson	Paula Herdson	Cameron Dickerson
Emily Reep	Steve Heistand	Drew Herdson	Margaret Dickerson
Allen Reep	Sue Heistand	Keith Kates	Tina Llorente
Tristan Ericson	Scott Herdson	Christine Kates	Jacyln Kinkella
Jessica Ericson	Nicki Herdson	Laura Ferree	Cheryl Reifsteck

The St. Paul's Dinner Group will be starting back up during the months of April and May. They are a great way to get better acquainted with our church friends over a casual meal. Look for the sign-up sheet at the Springettsbury entrance.

Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Altar Clean-up
03/10	8:00 AM	Bob Reed	Palmers	Harrison Palmer		Bob & Connie Reed	Team 3E: Sammy Barnes, Norma Shue, Cliff Beck, Sheridan Palmer	Pat Scarborough
03/10	10:30 AM	Geoffrey Simon	Ephraim Lipp	Jessica Ericson	Sandy Dickensheets	Amy & Chris Lipp & Family	Team 3L: Dan Garber, Joe Guarriello, Larry Becker	Tonya Cave, Sandy Dickensheets

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open 8:00 a.m.—4pm Mon—Thurs

Sunday, March 10—Easter Flower Orders Due

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for All
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
 1:00 PM York Conference Spring Assembly
 Christ Lutheran, Spry

Monday, March 11

7:00 PM Finance Mtg.—ZOOM

Tuesday, March 12

9:30 AM Pantry
 6:00 PM CREATE—Preschool—Grade 6
 6:00 PM Bridge of Hope Mtg—Christ Hall

Wednesday, March 13

10:00 AM Preschool & Pastor in Nave
 10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ Hall
 6:00 PM Lenten Dinner—Christ Hall
 7:00 PM Lenten Vespers—Nave

Thursday, March 14

10:00 AM Preschool & Pastor in Nave
 6:30 PM Handbell Choir—Choir Room
 7:30 PM Chancel Choir—Choir Room

Sunday, March 17

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for All
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
 4:30 PM Mission Trip Travelers—Christ Hall
 6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Sunday Morning, Preschool through Grade 6 children will meet upstairs in their age grouped classrooms. This is a great time to start your child in a class. Some of the best stories are explored during this winter and spring season.

Announcements and Up-dates for the week March 10, 2024

St. Paul's is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church's Clothing Ministry. Union collects 'gently used' clothing (and shoes) for its clothing closet and offers it **free of charge** to needy families in the York City community. A bin has been placed in the Good Shepherd room for collections.

Benevolence—Each year St. Paul's Congregation has set aside a portion of our giving to be used for charitable missions and projects to benefit our members and neighbors locally, regionally, nationally, and worldwide. If you are seeking funding to support a need in our community and beyond, please complete and submit an application. We still have capacity for projects in 2024. We are currently soliciting applications for 2025. Bright green copies are in the Good Shepherd Room and you can also obtain a fillable form from Patee in the church office.

St. Paul's Book Club The April meeting is set for April 11th with the book to be announced. All are welcome.

The house on the corner was condemned. At one time it had been a mom and pop grocery store. Before that it was a dry goods store. And early on it began as a hardware store supporting the blacksmith shop located on the lower side of a plot of ground at the center of the small village. But from blacksmith shop turned hardware turned dry goods turned grocery store turned single family home later to be subdivided it was turned into apartments. By the 70's it was vacant. Windowpanes broken out, tattered curtains flapping in the summer breeze and looking like frozen flippers in winter. It was the building of stories.

Old timers reminisced about it fondly. Those in the middle years of life recalled starting married life living in one of the apartments. Teenagers created tales that made younger children hurry past it at night, or avoid it altogether. Then it was condemned. Papers posted. Its future hope brought to an end. Decades passed. What once brought life to the village, what once brought commerce, what once provided shelter, what once provided story, was pulled down, it is no more. The lot is empty.

This morning we are greeted by the word “condemn” in the gospel reading “*Indeed God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*” Jesus is speaking. In a rather long monologue directed to an unidentified visitor by the name of Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to Jesus under cover of darkness. Nicodemus sought out Jesus and came to him asking some burning questions. But from the portion of the biblical text before us this morning you are not certain to whom Jesus is speaking.

The biblical conversation is between Nicodemus and Jesus. It began in the first verses of chapter 3 and follows the cleansing of the temple story we heard last week at the end of chapter 2. When we reach this section of monologue, Jesus is talking to a broader audience. He is talking to us. God's desire, we learn, is not to condemn but to save.

This must infuriate people who teach and preach about God and God's judgement being hellfire and brimstone. But this text isn't about ending things, doing humanity in, or doling out excruciating punishment. Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Light of the world, speaks the word to Nicodemus and to you and to me, that the Son's mission, task, desire, end and goal, is that he is come “*in order that the world might be saved through him.*”

And what is it that we are saved from? We are saved from condemnation. We are saved from the very thing that is killing us. In the Numbers text it was the snake bites from poisonous serpents. The snake bites from the poisonous serpents were occurring because God sent those snakes after his people “spoke against him.” The people didn't call upon him in prayer, praise or thanksgiving. They were grumbling, quarreling with one another about the horrible situation in which they found themselves. And instead of taking any ownership for the situation they created they spoke against God and Moses! Blame! Now God provided a way forward for his people, even for the people who were bitten and the result being life cut short. God instructs Moses to make a serpent of bronze and place it on a pole and those who are bitten, suffering, hurting, are to look to it for healing, restoration, life.

We are saved from everything and everyone that would rather see us obliterated from the landscape, removed from rank and file of civilized society. We are saved, as Luther stated in the Small Catechism *“From sin, death and the devil.”* What does this mean asks the question in the catechism *“so that we can live in peace and blessedness all of our days and in eternity with Christ Jesus.”*

Most of us are a little bit like Nicodemus. We are believers. We are people who have some theological knowledge. We are recognized in the community as people belonging to a specific religious tradition. We all share a peculiar religious vocabulary. We support the work of the faith community with our time, talent and treasure. And like Nicodemus we can be a bit overly confident in our religious faith based knowledge. We are easily enslaved to theological assumptions of the religious establishment so that we are not prepared to really hear what is new in the revelation of Jesus. What is really life giving, life affirming, life changing, life renewing, the kind of thing that leads to peace and blessedness all of our days.

What keeps me from peace and blessedness is the things that are killing me. In the wilderness when God’s people spoke against him, God sent the serpents. God also provided for healing, restoration, future; the serpent of bronze placed on the pole. In our confession we acknowledge things that are killing us, those things that hold us captive, those things that bind us and keep us from future; from the peace and blessedness that God desires for his people.

Then, God made a way forward for his people by the lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. Now, God makes a way forward for us by the lifting up of the Son of Man, by Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus is condemned to death. His sentence of condemnation will lead to suffering and death on a cross. He will be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent of bronze in the wilderness giving life to the people, Jesus is lifted up giving life to us; people who know him and people who didn’t know him, people who loved him and people who didn’t love him, people who were knowledgeable about faith and people who didn’t know a blessed thing about faith. He gives himself so that humanity has a way out, past, though, and beyond, the condemnation that is rightly ours. He gives himself so that there is healing, restoration, life. The life Jesus gives is richer and fuller; the kind of life that leads to peace and blessedness all of our days.

The house on the corner was condemned. After the blacksmith shop turned hardware turned dry goods turned grocery store turned single family home turned to apartments, then abandoned, was condemned and removed from sight. The corner lot is empty. Passersby only know of the rich past, childhood fear, and center for community life through the story and stories being told and retold. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Son of Man would be lifted up to provide a way for people in darkness and a way for them to be free from what is killing them. Jesus dug deep into the past telling of Moses and that ordeal with the venomous serpents. Today it is Jesus, the condemned one, who provides a way for us out of darkness and from the things that kill us, restoring us to the Father, through his healing gift of life. He gives himself to us in bread and wine and we tell the story of a rich past, childhood fear, community life, and restoration from condemnation. Amen.

FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22**SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10**

You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through

our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

[Jesus said:] "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."