

THE 3RD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

January 22nd, 2023

One Body of Christ + many different members



One Body of Christ + many different encounters



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CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com
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A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: O Lord God Almighty, because You have always supplied Your servants with the several gifts which come from your Holy Spirit alone, leave also us not destitute of Your manifold gifts nor of grace to use them always to Your honor and glory and the good of others; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Luke 4: 22-30 Wednesday: Jer. 5: 20-24 Friday: Rom. 7: 14-25a
Tuesday: Jer. 8: 4-7 Thursday: Acts 28: 1-6 Saturday: Hos. 2: 20-23

Musician: 10 a.m. – Mayumi Munoz
Reader: 10 a.m. – Don Fretz
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Don & Lois Fretz

January 2023 Worship Schedule

January 22nd – Epiphany 3 – Divine Service Setting One Communion
January 29th – Epiphany 4 – Morning Praise

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Today: 9:00 a.m. – Sunday School
9:10—9:40: Confirmation Class (*meet downstairs in youth room*)
Tuesday: 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. – Precious Moments
Wednesday: 10-11:30 a.m. – SOUL

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Beginning in February we will resume our regular schedule of meeting on the first 2 Sundays of each month.

PRECIOUS MOMENTS: If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing; hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area. Coffee and tea are always on.

FLOWERS have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Andy & Bette Vasko and family in loving memory of Susan Vasko.

SOUL is meeting **Wednesday, JANUARY 25 [not Thursday 26]!** SOUL participants have been notified since the beginning of the month but please note the change is for this week! Thank you!

OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES on the passing of David McBride's wife, Catherine, this past week. Please see the "Bulletins" page for Catherine's obituary and funeral details
If you plan on attending, please let Carole Pink know so she can tell David to get a rough count on how many coming from the church. Thank you.

LWML – Mary Martha:

HAPPY NEW YEAR! As we start a New Year, we remember it is full of **your Hope** and **your Promise**. "...And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. *"Philippians 4: 7*

The following is our schedule for our Winter/Spring program ([more details will follow](#)):

Feb 21, 7:00 pm: Speaker from the Mobile Closet
March 21, 7:00 pm: Quilt tying and stamp trimming
April 18, 7:00 pm: Speaker - Jude Mersereau
May 16, 7:00 pm: Bible Study - Pastor Todd (tentative)
June 10: Potluck (Details to follow)

Please feel free to attend any or all of our Tuesday night events! **January is a very special meeting since we will be disbursing the funds that God so graciously provided from our Fall Yard Sale and November Bazaar to different mission projects.**

(If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837)

BAZAAR DISPERSMENT: The LWML ladies were very pleased to be able to disburse Bazaar earnings at our January meeting to the following charitable causes:

SOUL:	\$1,500
Haiti Feeding Program	1,500
CLWR	1,500
Nicaragua	1,000
Ontario Medical Missions	1,000
Ukraine	1,000
Concordia Luth. Seminary	1,000
Lutheran Bible Translators	1,000
LAMP	500

Although we actually made a little more than this, (wow—our best year ever!) we decided to hold back a small portion so that we would have funds with which to make a few more donations as other needs or opportunities arise in the coming year. **THANK YOU AGAIN TO ALL WHO HELPED WITH OUT BAZAAR IN ANY WAY, SO THAT WE WERE ABLE TO RAISE MONEY TO DONATE TO ALL THESE MISSIONS.** We feel blessed to be able to serve our Lord in this way.

We are grateful for your support!!

Review and Renew

Back to the Basics

What We Believe & Why It Matters

Lenten Focus 2023

Wednesdays Feb 22 - March 29 7-8 PM

- 1) Ash Wednesday Simple Communion & ashes -
Purposeful praying or praying with purpose?
[Lord's Prayer focus]
- 2) What does "Living Word" mean
[10 Commandments focus]
- 3) What happens when I follow God's lead?
[the Apostles' Creed focus]
- 4) Little Christ, little me
[Baptism focus]
- 5) How our hearts and mouths align
[Confession and Forgiveness focus]
- 6) You are what you eat
[Holy Communion focus]

Midweek Lent will have hymns, prayer, Scripture
and a Bible Study format message
with discussion question time.
We meet in the Church Sanctuary.

Holy Week & Easter will be the usual worship services

Lenten Study Material

will be available before Ash Wednesday (which will be a regular church service with Communion and imposition of ashes) for all who wish to attend.

Holy Week will have regular church services.

"**Review & Renew**" is a Bible Study which will also be conducted by Pastor Todd in the church sanctuary.

2023 DONATION ENVELOPES have arrived and you can find yours in your Church mailbox. If you don't have a mailbox, please look for your envelopes on the table in the Narthex. If you don't have a mailbox and would like a mailbox, please let Pat know at secretary@christlutheransc.ca or call 905-685-8294 (Thursday or Friday morning).

GREETERS: A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board and we would ask that anyone who is interested in assisting for the coming year to please sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in the congregation.

HOLY COMMUNION
LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK SETTING ONE
THE 3RD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
January 22, 2023 + 10 AM Worship

FIRST HYMN:

“Come, Follow Me”

Tune: Machs Mit Mir, Gott

**“Come, follow me,” said Christ, the Lord, “All in my way abiding;
Your selfishness throw overboard, Oh, hear my call and guiding.
Oh, bear your crosses, and confide in My ex-ample as your guide.**

**“I Am the Light; I Light the Way, a godly life dis-play-ing;
I help you walk as in the day; I keep your feet from stray-ing.
I Am the Way, and well I show how you should journey here below.**

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS:

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

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**But if we confess our sin, God, Who is faithful and just, will forgive our
sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** *[Brief silence for reflection]*

Let us then confess our sin to God our Father:

**Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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
neighbours as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. 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.**

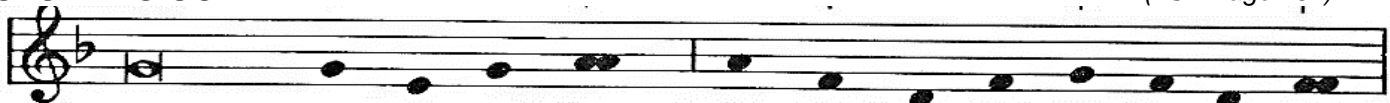
Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake, forgives you all of your
sin. As a called and ordained servant of Christ and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all of your
sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

SPOKEN KYRIE:

O Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy and give us Your peace. Amen.

GLORY TO GOD

(LSB Page 154)



A Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his peo-ple on earth.



B Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther:

We wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your
 glo-ry. Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther,
 Lord God, Lamb of God: You take a-way the sin of the world;
 have mer-cy on us. You are seat-ed at the right hand of the
 Fa-ther; re-ceive our prayer. For you a-
 lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,
 you a-lone are the Most High, Je-sus Christ, with the Ho-ly Spir-it,
 in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther. A-men

SPOKEN GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY:

The Lord be with you: **And also with you.**

Almighty and everlasting God, in Christ You revealed Your glory among the nations. Preserve the works of Your mercy, that Your Church throughout the world may persevere with firmly planted faith in the confession of Your saving name. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE WORD

The Old Testament: *Isaiah 9: 1-4*

There will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Epistle: *1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a*

[St. Paul writes]: For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

ALLELUIA VERSE:

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the

words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel: *St. Matthew 4: 12-25*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the 4th chapter:



☐ Glo - ry to You, O Lord.

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. This is the Gospel of the Lord:



☐ Praise to You, O Christ.

THE NICENE CREED:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life + of the world to come. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

HYMN OF THE DAY:

"One Bread, One Body"

www.hymnry.org& www.awodka.net/cre

Refrain



One bread, one bod-y, one Lord of all; one cup of



bless-ing which we bless, and we, though man-y



through-out the earth, we are one bod - y in this one Lord.



1	Gen - tile	or	Jew,	ser - vant	or	free,
2	Man - y	the	gifts,	man - y	the	works,
3	Grain for	the	fields,	scat - tered	and	grown,

Refrain



wom - an	or	man,	no	more.
one in	the	Lord	of	all.
gath - ered	to	one	for	all.

Text: John Foley, SJ, b. 1939
 Music: John Foley, SJ
 Text and music © 1978 John B. Foley, SJ, and OCP Publications


ONE BREAD, ONE BODY
 4 4 6 and re-

MESSAGE


OFFERINGS are gathered

OFFERING SONG:

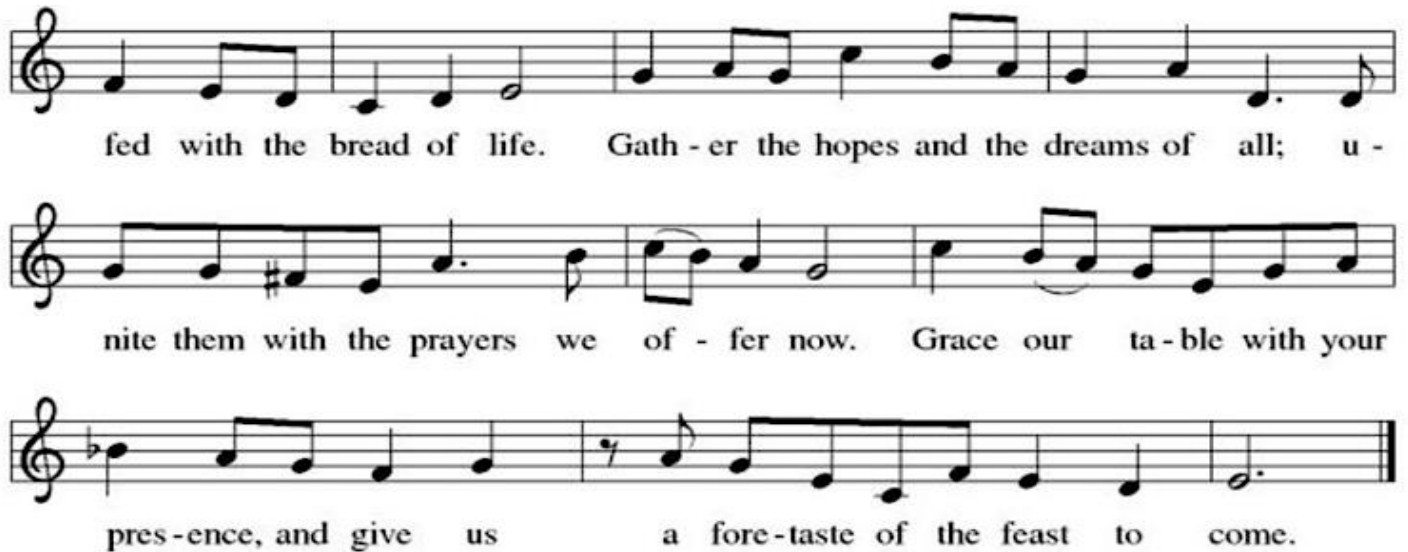
"Let The Vineyards"



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -
 nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your
 pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

<https://christlutheranchurchwebstergroves.wordpress.com/2020/09/11/sunday-october-4/>

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Thank you for Your abundant care of the earth. Bless and help for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. Inspire all who witness to You grace, mercy and faithfulness. Overshadow them with protection and holy confidence.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders in our land and across the world seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people, and all of creation. Embolden us to seek your justice, and strengthen us to claim your mercy for those most oppressed.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit, especially we bring before You [names here given...]. Strengthen and protect the medical professionals and staff who provide healing, cleaning, food, and care for those who are ill, and for all providing essential services so we can be safe at home. Bring comfort to those who wait for news about loved ones from a distance, and those who grieve without being present.

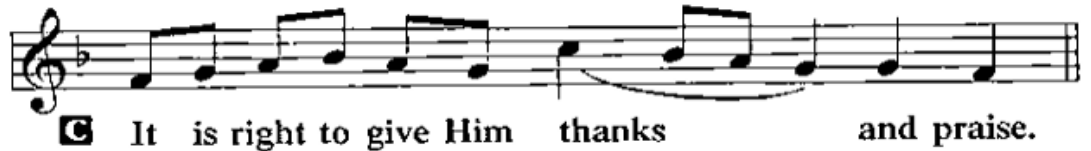
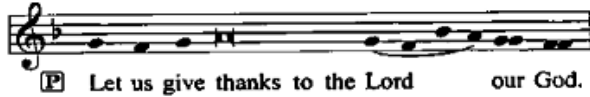
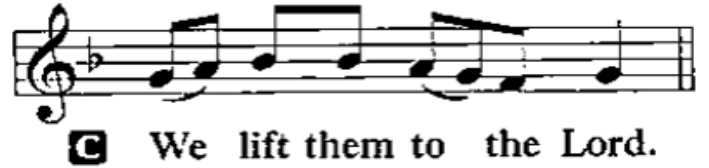
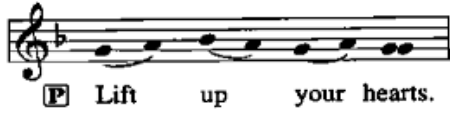
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all managers in our community and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Thank you for the saints who teach us to live faithfully in your vineyard. May our chorus join theirs until our labour is complete as members of Your Body in the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O Lord God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE SACRAMENT



It is truly good, right and joyful that we should at all times and in all places, offer thanks and praise to You, O Lord, O Holy Father, almighty and everlasting God; and now we praise You, that You have sent to us Your Only Son, and that in him, being found in human form, You have revealed the fullness of your glory. And so, with the Church on earth, and the company of Heaven, we praise Your name and join their un-ending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

LSB Page 161



THE LORD'S PRAYER *Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name....*

WORDS OF OUR LORD

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat; This is My + Body which is given for you, this do, in remembrance of Me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying "Drink of it all of you, this cup is the New Testament in My + Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

LAMB OF GOD

LSB tune # 163

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.

HOLY COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION [Pilgrim style]

COMMUNION HYMNS: "Let Us Break Bread Together"

Let us break bread to - ge-ther on our knees, Let us break bread to - ge-ther on our
 knees. When I fall down on my knees with my face to the ri - sing
 sun, O Lord, have mer-cy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees,
 Let us drink wine together on our knees.
 When I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees,
 Let us praise God together on our knees.
 When I fall down on my knees
 with my face to the rising sun,
 O Lord, have mercy on me.

“Sent Forth By God’s Blessing”

- 1 Sent forth by God’s blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended. Oh, now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of Christ’s teaching, receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.
Your grace shall incite us, your love shall unite us
to work for your kingdom and answer your call.

- 2 With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living,
the tasks of our ev’ryday life we will face—
our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
embracing God’s children, the whole human race.
With your feast you feed us, with your light now lead us;
unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

Words: Omer Westendorf, 1964 <https://charlesghose.com/2020/05/06/sent-forth-by-gods-blessing/>

POST COMMUNION HYMN: “Thank The Lord”

LSB Page 164



☐ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re-joice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re-calls his prom-is-es and leads his peo-ple forth in joy with



shouts of thanks-giv-ing. Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray: Almighty God, Who has given Your Son, Jesus Christ, as a Sacrifice for sin and the True Example of a godly life, give us grace that as we have received Him in the Holy Communion Feast we may daily abide in Him, hearing and believing His Holy Word and living out our days in peace and joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION:

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour, + and give you peace. **Amen.**

LAST HYMN: "Go, My Children, With My Blessing"

LSB # 922



1 "Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, nev - er a - lone.
2 "Go, my chil - dren, sins for - giv - en, at peace and pure.
3 "Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour - ished, clos - er to me.



Wak - ing, sleep - ing, I am with you, you are my own.
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.
Grow in love and love by serv - ing, joy - ful and free.



In my love's bap - tis - mal riv - er I have made you mine for - ev - er.
Here you heard my dear Son's sto - ry, here you touched him, saw his glo - ry.
Here my Spir - it's pow - er filled you, here my ten - der com - fort stilled you.



Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, you are my own."
Go, my chil - dren, sins for - giv - en, at peace and pure."
Go, my chil - dren, fed and nour - ished, joy - ful and free."

www.graceupland.org/lectionary-27-nineteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-october-03-2021-830am-and-11am/

SERVICE NOTE: HOLY COMMUNION order of service is reprinted with limited use permission from Lutheran Service Book, © 2006, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, USA. Settings are also held by: © ICET, liturgical texts & © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship; Music © 1978, 1988 Richard Hillert, (b. 1923), also © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, Augsburg Fortress, MN, USA.

REV. TODD HOEFFS
EPIPHANY 3 (series C)
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
January 22, 2023
UNITY IN DIVERSITY

A group of university alumni, highly established in their careers, got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life. Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups – porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite – telling them to help themselves to the coffee. When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said: "If you noticed, all the nice-looking expensive cups have been taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it's normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases it's just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really want is coffee, not the cup, but you consciously took the best cups... And then you began eyeing each other's cups. Life can be like that coffee; the jobs, money and position in society are like those cups. They're just tools to hold and contain Life, and the type of cup we have does not define, nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes, by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee. Savor the contents, not just the containers!

The most content people don't have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything. They walk by faith and not by sight. Their God lives in them, moving their steps, adding rhythm to their days, guarding their lives, trusting that He sees the mark of His Son's cross on your lives and will keep you until the day you return to Him and enter His Heavenly Home. In this life, live simply, love generously, care compassionately, speak kindly, trust hopefully.

This is how we live as the body of Christ in the world. Getting caught up with how the body looks and feels can overshadow the actual work and purpose of the body. We are all raised to be somewhat overly-sensitivity to the human body. Never perfectly satisfied with what we see in the mirror. Nearly a month into the new year, how many people try to make resolutions to diet, exercise, watch what they put into their bodies, how to cut costs of clothes and things for the body? The body has importance. God created it, gives it life. The body has a function, a calling, a purpose. The body is a gift we must care for, nurture, maintain & keep in some decent shape.

The church of gathered believers is a body. You, and all believers in Christ, in every place and time, live and breathe as that body, the church. In fact, it is the memory of this passage of Scripture Which gave me the idea to title my YouTube channel GATHERING THE SCATTERED

So that all people could be reached with Jesus' Gospel when COVID hit us. All people – whether they enter into a European Cathedral or thatched roof hut without walls in arid Kenya or a room on a floor at a Honolulu high-rise or a nursing home chapel or an old stone structure with stained glass....THE BODY OF CHRIST ARE MANY on this earth.

The Apostle Paul says this ONE BODY has MANY MEMBERS. All get baptized into this One Body – all people, all ages, Jews, Greeks, slaves & free –and we are all made alive and move by that ONE SPIRIT. Paul encourages some very bewildered believers. Corinth had been a place which grabbed attention. A southeast city in Greece, with ports, and ports mean goods, supplies, people & culture. Into this culture gathers a very young church. Organized church is new and unusual. Jews had synagogues & the temple, steeped in ancient tradition and God's Word;

Greeks had government run god & goddess temples with various forms of priests & prostitutes. Paul is blending this diverse group of people into one Body, showing them how they gather AS ONE under ONE Christ Jesus Who is the head of this Body. As you blend ingredients to make a dozen muffins or blend different voices to create one piece of music. When live under Christ, who we ARE as individuals matters less – what matters is who we are because of Christ Who is in us. It only matters if in our serving we desire spotlight or thanks or recognition or a nicer seat in Heaven. Diversity only matters in how and what we do, not the heart, the passion, the reason. Diversity allows each member to use their gifts as God has so given. You don't want me trying to balance the church check books, as math isn't my strong suit. Each of you has gifts of extreme value for working in the Lord's Kingdom. We may sometimes think a thumb or a pinky isn't such important fingers---[pinky and thumb rings?!] until you lose the ability to use it and then you quickly remember its purpose. So even more with the Body of Christ. Jesus gathers people of different shapes, sizes, ages, talents, abilities, needs, ethnicities, colours, backgrounds, cultures, strengths and weaknesses, bringing them together in his church. He places the weaker ones near the strong so they can be protected just as he placed our delicate and vital organs underneath muscles and bone to protect them. One of the many pitfalls of cultural and institutional Lutheranism is thinking that we all need to believe the same way about our faith. Or what the individual wants should reign supreme. Though we all say the words of the Apostles' Creed, there are various aspects of that creed that will impact us in different ways. Just as each person will take away something different from this one sermon. As Lutheran Church Canada, we are called a Synod. The Word SYNOD means "walking together". No matter where we are or lie o worship. Not supposed to be thinking "oh, I'm better than they are", but walking. Together. Supportive. Encouraging. Protecting. The Body of Christ walks and moves together to be a physical living presence of Jesus' message – His saving Gospel of healing and forgiveness to a hurting world. Just as the human body cannot be all eyes, for without ears and a mouth, the body couldn't listen nor respond. Our human bodies can't be all feet and no hands, or all arms and no legs. There is great Godly UNITY in this wonderful DIVERSITY because we are all baptized into this one body with One Spirit. Our talents will come together, our focus will be in the same direction, To love our God and love our neighbour. Everyone in the body has value, everyone contributes something blessed by being in this Body. Sin rears its ugly head when we begin thinking one body part is better than another. The Church needs a pastor and people and resources to keep things going. But the Church needs more – Worship life, prayer, access to God's grace with Sacraments, A vision, goals, lay leadership, responsibility, joy, peace, patience, music, financial handling, building maintenance, outreach into the community, witnessing the faith, friendship, encouragement & love for one another and a welcome to the stranger. Not one of these is more important than another. Although, caring for all in need is pretty important for growth in faith. We need it all, we need each other. Signs of wear show if one bodily member gets over-used. People who age tend to need new hips & knees because they over-used them in life somehow. For many years now we can replace them and extend the life of the person. That doesn't happen with the body of Christ. When one suffers, everybody suffers. All share in the sorrow and pain. Paul interestingly chooses an "Easter" word for suffering, called paschal. Sacrificial suffering. A suffering we all go through for a God-given purpose. When the body of Christ suffers in the work of ministry, it is a faithful suffering, one we all bear. Or we should. People often wear blinders for fear of

seeing need and getting a “job”. That can mean the institution of the church is in greater need than the mission. Both are good, But we are seeing far too many church buildings close. That can be both a challenge and an opportunity. The city of Corinth looks and acts much different now than it did in Paul’s day. St. Catharines today is different than the St. Catharines of 1950 or 1978 or 1995 or even 2015. Churches go through life cycles, beginning with growth and then once it reaches a peak, it starts to plateau. Church members love plateau regions, because it a time of stability and little change. If a church plateaus too long it easily grows stagnant. Then the church must “re-invent” herself. A common term among celebrities, it’s really about finding the new vision, seizing the opportunities for outreach while drawing upon the strengths of the members. A time to learn and grow and embrace change. It is not healthy to be stuck on the past based on emotions Nor is it healthy looking far into the future which we see with rose coloured glasses. We are Jesus’ Body in 2023. Being present in the moment is living by faith and trust in God. The hurting worlds needs us to be present in the moment, To hear the cries for help and bring soothing Gospel medicine. Because we are then all about being Jesus to people in the here and now. Finding new ways to actively reach people And in this way, the Gospel is seen and heard through you. YOU ARE JESUS’ BODY & EACH ONE A MEMBER OF IT. That’s how we do it! Together. What did Christ do? He lived, taught and died for all. Both Jews and Greeks, slave or free, all are ONE in JESUS. He brings unity in diversity. We support the weaker, help the needy, walk with the downtrodden, listen to the depressed, for we are all ONE in Christ. Baptized into His life, baptized into His death, members knitted together into a fabric woven on the loom of the cross. All are needed and all are welcome. Every bodily member is received in the same faith given by Baptism into Jesus. All of you are washed clean. All of you are forgiven. All of you have encounters with the living Lord. All of you have gifts & plenty of so many unique things to share. The early days of the Biblical church had gifted men & women, young and old, kids and adults, who served in the Church’s ministry of witness and faith formation. Diversity is good. New perspectives, new vision, seeing a hurting world in need of help. The Spirit of God creates unity in this diversity. Never Moreso when we come forward to receive the Holy Meal Which makes us one family and celebrates this life-saving miracle. Here God sees you all as one. Set free from selfishness. Welcomed with open arms. No matter who you are or what you’ve done you’re all welcome home as members of Jesus’ Body. In all the different fits, fashions and faces. Amen.