

# THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

March 5th, 2023



## CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294  
[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)

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

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
**Parish Assistant:** Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) [parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)  
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**Bulletin by email:** Judy Mason [chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca)

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING\\_TKTi9c\\_OIBbMqGwLw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw)

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**Prayer:** O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Prayer for Turkey and Syria:**

Almighty God, merciful Father, Your thoughts are not our thoughts, and Your ways are not our ways. In Your infinite wisdom which is beyond our understanding, You have permitted this disastrous earthquake to befall the people in Turkey and Syria. Direct all efforts to attend to the injured. Console the bereaved. Protect the helpless, deliver all who are still in danger, and give courage and steadfastness to the relief and aid workers. Bring hope and healing to the suffering that they may find relief and restoration. Open our hearts that we would provide necessary aid to those who are afflicted and distressed by this disaster. All this we ask through the bitter sufferings and death of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You, one God, now and forever.

**Prayer for Ukraine:**

Please continue to remember in prayer our brothers and sisters of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Ukraine (SELCU).

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: John 7: 14-18      Wednesday: 1 Sam. 3:1-18      Friday: Heb. 5: 4-10  
Tuesday: Acts 5: 17-29      Thursday: Jer. 20: 7-13      Saturday: Matt. 21: 33-46

**Musician:** Praise Band      **Wednesday:** Carole Pink  
**Reader:** Paul Mason  
**Greeters:** Gary & Wendy Kuenzel

**EVENTS THIS WEEK:**

Today      9:00 a.m.: Sunday School  
              9:10-9:40 am: Confirmation Class today  
              3:00 p.m.: Niagara Zone LWML Prayer Service at Resurrection  
Monday    10:00 a.m.: Luther Manor Bible Study  
              7:30 p.m.: Choir Practice  
Tuesday   9:30 – 11:00 a.m.: Precious Moments  
              8:00 p.m.: Parish Ed. Zoom meeting  
Wednesday 6:00 p.m.: Praise and Pizza Lenten Dinner  
              7:00 p.m.: "The Apostles Creed Focus"  
              8:00 p.m.: Council Meeting  
Thursday 10-11:30 a.m.: SOUL  
              7:00 p.m.: Women's Bible Study

**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 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Coffee and tea are always on.


**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, for all who wish to join.

Ash Wednesday will be a regular church service with Communion and imposition of ashes.

"**Review & Renew**" is a Bible Study which will be conducted by Pastor Todd in the church sanctuary the remaining Wednesdays of Lent

Holy Week will be regular church services.

Join the Fellowship Committee for a "**FREE DINNER**" every Wednesday of Lent, at 6:00 p.m. before the "**Review & Renew**" Bible Study



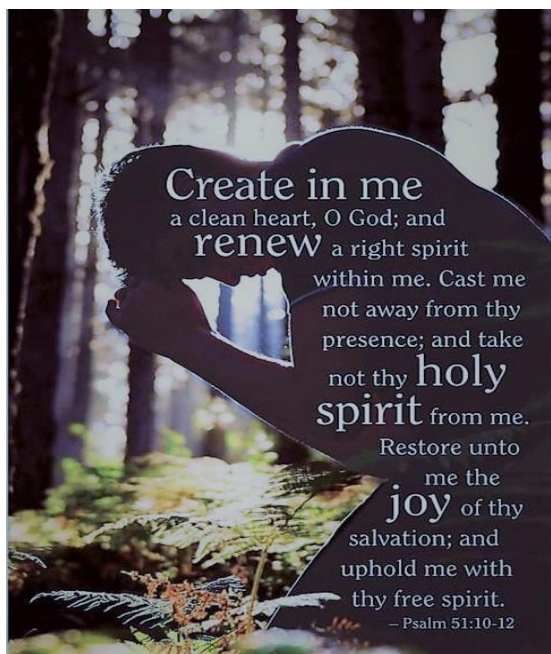
|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Wednesday, February 22: | Praise and Pizza |
| Wednesday, March 1:     | Chili at Church  |
| Wednesday, March 8:     | Praise and Pizza |
| Wednesday, March 15:    | Soup & Salvation |
| Wednesday, March 22:    | Praise and Pizza |
| Wednesday, March 29:    | Praise and Pasta |



**From the desk of Pastor Todd**

**MARCH 2023 WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

- March 5 – Lent 2 -- Scripture & Song Service [Worship/Praise band] [Daylight savings]
- March 12 – Lent 3 -- LSB DS Setting 3 Communion
- March 19 – Lent 4 – Creative Morning Praise
- March 26 – Lent 5 – LSB DS setting 1 Communion



# NIAGARA ZONE PRAYER SERVICE

Sunday, March 5, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Registration: 2:30 p.m.

Resurrection Lutheran Church

470 Glenridge Ave, St Catharines, Ontario

THEME: "My Soul Rejoices"

Bible Verse: Psalm 51: 11

A dessert and/or fruit from each society attending would be appreciated.

Car-pooling is recommended since there are only 14 parking spots next to the Seminary.

There is additional parking available in Zone 1, Lot M.

Led by Pastor John Makey and Pastor Kurt Lantz



## MUSIC TRIVIA & DINNER

The Fellowship Committee is reserving a few tables for an evening of:

### NAME THAT TUNE!!

Saturday, March 11th

Port Dalhousie Yacht Club, 74 Lighthouse Rd.

Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Pub Food Buffet at 6:00 p.m.

Game Begins at 7:00 p.m.

Tickets \$25 plus HST = \$28.25

Sign up in the Narthex if you are interested in a fun evening of "Music Trivia" and "Fellowship". Once we have committed numbers, the Fellowship Committee will purchase and distribute the tickets. Any questions contact Tim, Judy or Marge

**YOUTH AND CONFIRMANDS** are invited to join us **Sunday, March 19th following service.** We will have a free pasta lunch, then drive to an indoor mini putt in the Falls, then have a treat at DQ. Cost is approximately \$20. Friends are welcome to join us! We have room for 7 youth, however, parents— we may need another driver. Talk with Val, Elizabeth or Louise to reserve a spot or if a parent can drive please let Louise know. (905-339-8579)

**MARY MARTHA:** *The following is our Mary Martha Schedule for our Winter/Spring program:*

- March 21: Quilt tying and stamp trimming
- April 18: Speaker-Jude Mersereau
- May 16: Bible Study--Pastor Todd (tentative)
- June 10: Potluck

Please feel free to attend any, or all, of our Tuesday night events!  
(If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837)



**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL:** Mark your calendars for VBS. **In-person VBS** is being planned this summer **Monday, July 17 to Friday, July 21**. The program will run in the morning with an afternoon extended care for Grade 1-6. More information will be coming.

| <u>Last Sunday Attendance:</u> |               | <u>February 26th, 2023</u> |                    | <u>Attn: 10 a.m. – 80 SOUL: 32</u> |                    |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                | <u>Budget</u> | <u>Weekly Need</u>         | <u>Last Sunday</u> | <u>Year To Date</u>                | <u>+ or - (--)</u> |
| Current:                       | 297,841.00    | 5,840.02                   | 2,056.25           | 33,507.43                          | (18,041.97)        |
| LCC Missions                   | 17,000.00     | 333.33                     | 107.00             | 2,089.00                           | (853.31)           |
| Property Improvement:          |               |                            | 171.00             | 1,087.00                           |                    |

**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.

**A MEMORIAL DONATION** has been given to SOUL in memory of Bernie Kuenzel by Frank & Ivy Parkhouse.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Daniela and Eduardo!!! Clarissa is here! Baby and Mom (and Eduardo) are doing fine.

**A BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who donated Cheese Whiz or made a donation. They were very happy and thankful to receive all the jars and cheques.

**HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED JOINING THE CHOIR?** Do you like to sing? We could always use more voices and would give you a hearty welcome. We will be starting up practices again on February 6<sup>th</sup> and continuing as we do, each Monday evening from 7:30 – 9 pm approximately. We look now towards the Lenten season beginning on Ash Wednesday (Feb 22) and taking us into Holy Week in April. Speak to Carole if you might be interested.



## Easter Colouring Contest

Colouring Sheets will be made available  
in the Narthex starting

**SUNDAY, MARCH 5TH.**

All entries will be put on display.

The following categories:

- ❖ **SUNDAY SCHOOL**
- ❖ **CONFIRMAND AND YOUTH**
- ❖ **SOUL**
- ❖ **CONGREGATION**

Top winner from each category will  
receive a gift card.

Winners will be announced at the Easter  
Breakfast

# SCRIPTURE & SONG SERVICE

THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT  
March 5, 2023 + 10 AM Worship

## GATHERING

### BEGINNING SONG:

*"God Loved The World"*

LSB # 571 VS 1-4

**God loved the world so that He gave - His only Son the lost to save  
That all who would in Him believe, should everlasting life receive.**

**Christ Jesus is the Ground of faith, Who was made flesh and suffered death;  
All that confide in Him alone - are built on this chief Corner-stone.**

**God would not have the sinner die, His Son with saving grace is nigh,  
His Spirit in the Word does teach, how we, the blessed goal, may reach.**

**Be of good cheer, for God's own Son forgives all sins which you have done;  
You're justified by Jesus' blood, your Baptism grants the highest good.**

*Words & Music public domain: <http://www.lutheran-hymnal.com/lyrics/tlh245.htm>*

## WE BEGIN IN GOD'S NAME

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

**Amen.**

I was glad when they said to me,

**Let us go to the House of the Lord!**

Unless the Lord builds the House,

**In vain do the builders labour.**

Surely the Lord is in this place.

**This is the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven!**

You are gracious and merciful, O God,

**Slow to anger, rich in love.**

Receive our prayers and worship as You have promised

**And uphold us by Your Spirit,**

Until all things, mended by Your mercy,

**Are made whole and well in You,**

Through Jesus Christ

**Our healer and our hope. Amen.**

## KYRIE--PRAYING FOR MERCY

John Newton, 1779

arr. Edwin O. Excell (1851-1921), alt.

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of six staves of music, arranged in three pairs. Each pair has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is in a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are written below the staves. The lyrics are: "Have mer - cy on Your peo -- ple, Lord; have mer - cy Je -- sus Christ; have mer --- cy on Your peo --- ple, Lord; have mer - cy grant us peace." The underlines in the original image are red for "mer - cy" and blue for "peo -- ple, Lord" and "Je -- sus Christ".

Lyrics: Kyrie text; A. Meade, 1975 © Creative Communications for the Parish

Source: Amazing Grace <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/An-Analysis-of-'-Amazing-Grace-Thornely-Thornely/d3498a752ca06c27e107c07d837494c05cda12b0>

## CONFESSION OF SINS & FORGIVENESS

To You, O Lord God,

**All hearts are open, to You all desires are fully known. We come to You, moved by Your Word and Spirit, as sinners, confessing our sins. Forgive us in Your mercy. Remember us in Your love. Show us Your way, teach us Your path, lead us in truth and faithfulness, for the sake of our neighbour and for Your sake, O Lord God, in the hope of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.**

By water, Word and Spirit, our God gives you new birth and through the death and resurrection of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in His name and in His stead,

I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

When the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!

**Praise be to God!**

## HYMN OF PRAISE

*“Shout To The Lord”*

My Jesus, my Saviour – Lord there is none like You  
All of my days I want to praise  
The wonders of Your mighty love  
My comfort, my shelter – Tower of refuge and strength  
Let ev’ry breath all that I am – never cease to worship You

*Chorus:*

Shout to the Lord, all the earth – let us sing  
Power and majesty – Praise to the King  
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
At the sound of Your name  
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands  
Forever I’ll love You, forever I’ll stand  
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

My Jesus, my Saviour – Lord there is none like You  
All of my days I want to praise  
The wonders of Your mighty love  
My comfort, my shelter – Tower of refuge and strength  
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Forever I’ll love You, forever I’ll stand  
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

*CCLI Song # 1406918 – Darlene Zschech. © 1993 Wondrous Worship (Admin. By Music Services, Inc.) For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com) – CCLI License # 775293*

## GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY

Hear my prayer O Lord; **Listen to my call for help.**

We pray: Merciful God and Father, we thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ to suffer and give His life for this world. Teach us, who have been born again by water and the Word in Baptism, to forget about serving ourselves alone and rely only on Christ our Saviour for serving others. For He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## SCRIPTURE

**Old Testament:** *Genesis 12:1-4*

Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

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



**Epistle:** *Romans 4:1-5, 13-17*

[St. Paul writes]: What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness... For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

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

**Spoken Gospel Verse:** *St. Mark 10:45*

**The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.**

**Holy Gospel:** *St. John 3: 1-17*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. John, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter: **Glory to You, O Lord.**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. '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. '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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord: **Praise to You, O Christ!**

**THE APOSTLES' CREED:**

God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess the faith.

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen.**

# CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

## GOSPEL SONG:

### "Low, The Way Is Low"

♩ = 102

1. Low, — the way is low with the Man the an - gels praise.  
2. See — the glo - ry road, He was temp - ted by it too.  
3. When — our time is gone we will see the great new day.

5 He — who spoke the sky was a ba - by dressed in hay. We are com -  
But — He set HIS course with Je - ru - sa - lem in view.  
Till — that day ap - pears, all we know is Je - sus' way.

9 — pan - ions of — the One whose name is love, — we share His life as we

12 grow. We car - ry Je - sus' death — with each and ev - 'ry breath, — our hope is

15 high, the way is low.

CCLI Song # 1272094 – Robin Mann © 1980 Mann, Robin

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## MESSAGE

### THE OFFERINGS *are gathered*

## OFFERING SONG:

### "Give Thanks"

Henry Smith © 1978

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One;  
give thanks, because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.  
Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One;  
give thanks, because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.

**And now let the weak say 'I am strong', let the poor say 'I am rich',  
because of what the Lord has done for us;  
and now let the weak say 'I am strong', let the poor say 'I am rich',  
because of what the Lord has done for us.  
Give thanks...give thanks-----!**

<https://www.music-ministry.org/hymns/give-thanks-with-a-grateful-heart/>

### **PRAYERS**

*God called Abraham to follow him and promised him a son through whom blessing would come to all nations. Let us pray for the people of every nation, that God would bless them through Jesus Christ his Son and through his word in the Holy Scriptures.*

Heavenly Father: thank you that Jesus was obedient to your word in every respect and that he lived a perfect life for us. Forgive us our neglect of your word and the prayers it contains. Renew in us regular and faithful use of the psalms, and bring us to glorify you for your wonderful creation.

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

We pray for the nations of the world, that they may receive the blessing of peace and prosperity. Help all people value the world you have made and use it responsibly.

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

Watch over all travellers, exiles and refugees. Guide them to a home they can call their own. Wrap Your protective wings shielding those suffering from war torn areas, persecution, apathy and all manner of disaster.

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

Thank you for moving people to enquire into the Christian faith. Make our witness effective, and work saving faith through your word. Bless all parents who are preparing for the baptism of a child and help their sponsors to be a good example of the Christian life.

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

Give true knowledge and firm faith to those who preach and teach your word. Help them love those they teach and give them the skills they need.

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

Comfort those who mourn and support and strengthen all who are sick and injured, or in other need, including *(insert name(s) here)* and others known to us and whom we now name in our hearts...*(brief silence)*

*Hear us O God – **Your mercy is great.***

Father, you justified Abraham because he believed your promise. Help all to believe in your Son, Jesus Christ, so that no one fear judgment, but receive life, forgiveness, and salvation through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

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

**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. 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**

### **CLOSING PRAYER FOR THE WORD:**

**Blessed Lord God, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Help us so that we may hear, read, mark, learn and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Who with the Father and Spirit You rule and reign as one God, now and forevermore. Amen.**

Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep. May you hear His voice and keep His Word.

**Amen, thanks be to God.**

Jesus is the Pathway that leads to life. May You follow in His narrow way.

**Amen, praise be to God.**

Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. May you be rooted and grounded in His Word and love.

**Amen. Glory to our God.**

May the Almighty God, the Father, Son + and Holy Spirit, bless and keep you now and always.

**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:**

*"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"*

**Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light:**

*Refrain:*

***Take my hand, precious Lord,  
Lead me home.***

**When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,  
When my life is almost gone,  
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall:**

*Refrain:*

***Take my hand, precious Lord,  
Lead me home.***

**When the darkness appears and the night draws near,  
And the day is past and gone,  
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand:**

*Refrain:*

***Take my hand, precious Lord,  
Lead me home.***

*Thomas Dorsey, 1942*

<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/p/l/t/m/pltmhand.htm>



**REV. TODD HOEFFS**  
**LENT 2**  
**John 3:16-18**  
**ALL MEANS ALL**  
**March 5, 2023**

*For God so loved the whole world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 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. [from John 3]*

I have a wooden chip carving name plate on my desk.  
An aged member of my Edmonton parish made it for me.  
One side reads REV. TODD HOEFFS; the other side reads:  
GOD IS LOVE; HE DIED FOR ALL.

The carver told me this way, you will see the message  
and always have something to share with whomever walks  
through your door.

A message he drew from John 3:16, the Gospel reading today.  
God so loved the whole world.

Κοσμος (cosmos) is the Greek word John chooses for “world”.  
It’s creation in its entirety.

Universe, galaxies, stars, planets, everything – earth.

The ground, the plants, mountains, water--  
everything is of value and in need of redeeming.

Because everything is negatively affected by human sin. That world was pretty large in John’s day—  
Which included Roman soldiers, pagans, Pharisees, people who went to the temple regularly  
and those who weren’t allowed in the temple, lepers and other “unclean” folk – anyone regarded as  
public sinners to be avoided—Today our world is even bigger and we know more and more about it  
and the outer limits in space. Today we look on our phones and tablets viewing news  
like a window into the outside world. Everyone is included in the world God so loved.

All means all. When you learn how to sit at the table with the Judas you know,  
You’ll appreciate and understand the love of Jesus. God loves the world so much that He gave  
everything. That is how we are motivated to give.

It’s God’s world. We are called to love it. As Nicodemus learns at night with Jesus.

Obviously he’s curious. Nicodemus shares how he “knows He’s are a teacher from God,  
for none can do as he can do apart from God’s Presence.” Nicodemus is a leader among the Jews.  
In public, Nicodemus’s loyalties are clearly devoted to the religious establishment.

But in private, he has doubts. Jesus is more than a good teacher of the God’s Law,  
Jesus IS the Living walking talking WORD, anointed with the Spirit. HE and the Father are One.  
Nicodemus wants this kind of relationship. Jesus is asking Nicodemus to be born in a new way,  
to be born from above, to bear His divine logic in a world so not divine.

Jesus is asking Nicodemus to be on the ground floor of something new.

To turn away from what has been done before, to turn away from the rules and logic that have  
ordered his life up to this point, to step out into the world in a new way.

A new view. A new love. A new vision and pattern for living and seeing the world.

To be born is to be absolutely dependent. It’s to begin to learn life and language from scratch.

To be born is to be profoundly naïve to the world. Born again is a common translation for this  
passage. It’s really BORN FROM ABOVE. Born in a new way which only God can orchestrate.

By Word and water and Spirit. This recalls Jesus’ own emergence from the waters of the Jordan.

It recalls Israel’s own emergence from slavery into liberation through the waters of a parted Red sea.





To forge an identity apart from the ritual and rule which has shaped them and so re-imagine their communities and their very lives as God does. Born from above means we are living with a new pattern of living, a new way of approaching people and faith and heaven, a radically altered perception. As with birth we breath in oxygen to our lungs, Born from above involves breathing in the Holy Spirit, A lifetime of enjoying God's grace and mercy. Nicodemus has inherited a great tradition, for he is a Pharisee; he has tested it in the experience of life; he has conformed to it his habits of conduct, speech, thought and feeling. How can he break away from all this and begin again? It's as hard as returning to his mother's womb and coming out again. Born from above and born of the spirit are unknowns. The Holy Spirit Himself will lead all people into this new way of life.

The Spirit is like the wind. He calls all to faith as He wishes. He brings you not only to see the Kingdom of God, but you get to *enter* it. You're not a silent passenger. Or a mere dreamlike philosophy. Entry into the Kingdom of God is by Baptism and faith in Jesus.

Deepening our trust in God. Increasing our willingness to follow. Walking more and more to the Light so that our wayward sinful stepping diminishes. And LOVE is the reason behind it all.

God so loved the world. Agape love. A sacrificial love. A giving love with no strings attached.

NO pre-requisites. No exams. No cost to you. Only cost to God. High cost. The price of Jesus' life.

Yet, why love a world prone to wander? Why keep covenant with a people who too often turn their backs – and I'm not just talking about all the sinners out *there*. Why would God continue to love ones such as us? Ones settled in our ways and satisfied – kinda – with going through the motions of our days. Though it's easier to bring to mind people out *there* who don't even seem to be thinking about God or faith, and all the ways we're really not that loveable.

Why would God keep on loving the mess which is us? This isn't the once-upon-a-time love of a distant God, This is a lasting, gruelling, focused, intense love that moved God to send Jesus to die.

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross Clears away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God. God loves. We love God. We love others. We love ourselves...? How???? Love is hard.

We humans pamper ourselves, baby each other and are terrible enablers. We look to blame people for what's wrong in our lives. We are all too often over-concerned with self at the expense of people around us. We can only love ourselves because God loves us 1<sup>st</sup>. We can only love those beyond the walls because God loves the whole world. God IS LOVE and we love as deeply as He

does. Because we are born from above. We have a new outlook. Our eyes may see a person not deserving of love But our faith has a Spirit created filter over our eyes So that we see our selves

And each other As children of God worthy of love. When we love one another,

God dwells deeply within us, and His love becomes complete in us!" When we act in love

We no longer have the old negative self Lashing out or judging or condemning – That's not love,

We have a new self, born of God, Which sees life as God sees life. Which sees people as fellow brothers and sisters worthy of respect, And honour and value and welcome and love.

By this new way we will only die an earthly death, Body into the grave like Jesus. But we will not perish. We will not be dead forever. We will live forever with God. God has called us to be the Body of Jesus in the world giving witness to this message. While the things we see and feel and experience might put us off, The world is not condemned And we don't need to add any condemnation. Satan is condemned. He is the enemy chained to hell. The KOSMOS is there for us to love in what we say, what we do and how we think. That is how we engage the world, And how we love the world as God loves. It's not fearful, its freeing. It's not a waste, it's a witness.

This is why we collect Cheez Whiz for street people, Why we collect Bear Paw cookies for people in need downtown; This is why we collect clothing for people who need it; This is why we support SOUL ministries for the developmentally challenged. This is why we have Mary Martha missions,

This is why we have Precious Moments mother-baby time; This is why we pray, sing, read the Bible, remember our Baptism, Eat the Body and drink the Blood of Jesus,

So God's LOVE becomes our LOVE We can love ourselves as God loves. We can love others as God loves, And that LOVE is felt in the community. All are loved. The whole Kosmos.

ALL MEANS ALL.

AMEN.