

# **Hope Lutheran Church**

## **Worship Notes for Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Installation Service**

Last Sunday, 28 people were in attendance for Pastor Erik's Installation service, including members of Pastor Erik's family, a friend, and Pastor Jay Dyrland. Pastor Jay needed to step-in at the last minute as his representative for the service, as Pastor Charles Jackson needed to self-isolate after being informed of being in-contact with someone who contracted Covid-19.

#### **Representative Committee of the Synod**

The chairperson of the Representative Committee, retired Pastor Norm Lentz, "appointed by and acting on behalf of the Synod Council of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories" has emailed our Council Chair. It is our understanding that this committee has been established to the Synod Council to investigate the congregation regarding our Call to Pastor Erik. Council has responded with a number of questions regarding the process and we are awaiting a reply from the Committee.

#### **Special Congregational Meeting August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

The Special Congregational Meeting was held in the church hall and by telephone last Friday evening. There were over 20 people participating, with about equal numbers in-person and on the phone. It was an opportunity to hear from those people requesting the meeting and Bishop Larry Kochendorfer, as well as other members who had questions or wished to comment. Usually the minutes of a Special Congregational Meeting come to the next Congregational Meeting, but Council will prepare a draft of the minutes and hopes to have them ready for distribution in about 2 weeks.

#### **Next Steps Since Resuming In-Person Worship Services**

We have now had two worship services following the re-opening guidelines issued by Alberta Health Services, including one service with Holy Communion. We are grateful that those who feel it is safe to attend in-person have the opportunity to do so, albeit very differently from our services before the Covid-19 pandemic. We plan to continue with these services, but also want to consider other options for those in the congregation who are not able to attend in person, including the possibility of calling in on your phone to hear the service, or watching a video of the service on your computer. Other options would be to pick up Worship Notes and announcements each week at the church and drop-off copies for your friends from Hope, or to receive this information by mail. Please think about what will work for

you through the fall and into the winter. Council will be in touch before finalizing our plans. If you have comments, please contact a member of Council.

### **Pastor's Office**

We have a round table for the office but we are still looking for chairs. If you have any to donate please contact the office and we will arrange to pick them up.

### **Pastoral Visits on Wednesdays**

First, I want to apologize that I haven't had enough time to visit you all. I'm sorry. Moving forward, I'd like to fix this. To prioritize this, I'd like to dedicate most Wednesdays for calls and visits. I planned to do this before, but I haven't got ahead enough to free up Wednesdays from finalizing Worship Notes/sermons. I'm a bad multi-tasker, just ask my wife. I'm working on all this, and we'll be adjusting to a new rhythm of services and Worship Notes soon (when we figure out how best to proceed). I ask for your patience. That said, please don't hesitate to reach out by phone (calling the church will get me whether I'm there or not) or by email ([pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net](mailto:pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net)).

### **Mount Carmel Bible College**

Mount Carmel Bible College (just down the street from the church), has students in volunteer placements as part of their program. This year, things look quite different. Still, they are hoping to get students involved with the community in safe ways.

One option they are playing with is to pair students with a local senior (or two) for an hour or two a week. Some ideas of things the students would be able to do are:

- Small household tasks/cleaning
- Yard work
- Small errands/shopping
- Or just conversations/company (with distancing of course)

If you would be interested in being paired with any students for something like this, or know someone who would, please let me know by calling the church, or emailing me at [pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net](mailto:pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net). I'm sure the school would also receive contact directly by emailing Katie Greenway-Short at [kgreenway@mountcarmel.net](mailto:kgreenway@mountcarmel.net) or by calling (780) 465-3015 ext. 1002

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Proper 18 – 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Series A

## **ELW Service of the Word**

*Created by Pastor Erik Osness*

780-466-8502 – [pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net](mailto:pastor-hopelutheran@telus.net) – Office Hours: ~~Mon~~, Tues, Fri, 9:30 am-1:00 pm

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### **PRE-SERVICE INTRODUCTION**

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

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### **INVOCATION**

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

**Amen.**

### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

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.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God,

**have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

### **ABSOLUTION**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace we have been saved. In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in our hearts through faith. Amen.

## GATHERING SONG - ELW #511 – *Thy Strong Word*



1 Thy strong word did cleave the dark - ness; at thy  
 2 Lo, on those who dwelt in dark - ness, dark as  
 3 Thy strong Word be - speaks us righ - teous; bright with  
 4 From the cross thy wis - dom shin - ing break - eth



    speak - ing it was done. For cre - at - ed light we  
 night and deep as death, broke the light of thy sal -  
 thine own ho - li - ness, glo - rious now, we press toward  
 forth in con - qu'ring might; from the cross for - ev - er



thank thee, while thine or - dered sea - sons run.  
 va - tion, breathed thine own life - breath - ing breath.  
 glo - ry, and our lives our hopes con - fess.  
 beam - eth all thy bright re - deem - ing light.



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Praise to thee who light dost send!



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia with - out end!

5 Give us lips to sing thy glory,  
 tongues thy mercy to proclaim,  
 throats that shout the hope that fills us,  
 mouths to speak thy holy name.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 May the light which thou dost send  
 fill our songs with alleluias,  
 alleluias without end!

6 God the Father, light-creator,  
 to thee laud and honor be.  
 To thee, Light of Light begotten,  
 praise be sung eternally.  
 Holy Spirit, light-revealer,  
 glory, glory be to thee.  
 Mortals, angels, now and ever  
 praise the holy Trinity!

Text: Martin H. Franzmann, 1907–1976  
 Music: EBENEZER, Thomas J. Williams, 1869–1944  
 Text © 1969 Concordia Publishing House

## 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.**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray:

God of grace, through your Son you have reconciled your creation to yourself. Still, we continue to find ways to divide and destroy the unity you intend for us. Preserve your church that, assured of Christ's presence among us, we may exemplify the peace and reconciliation that can only come from you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11**

*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

<sup>7</sup>So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM: Psalm 119:33-40**

*I desire the path of your commandments. (Ps. 119:35)*

<sup>33</sup>Teach me, O LORD, the way | of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it | to the end.

<sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall | keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with | all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of | your commandments,  
for that is | my desire.

<sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to | your decrees**

**and not to | unjust gain.**

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from be- | holding falsehood;  
give me life | in your way.

<sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise | to your servant,  
which is for | those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach | that I dread,  
because your judg- | ments are good.

<sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for | your commandments;  
by your righteousness en- | liven me.**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the Beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 16<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

. . .

For anyone expecting a fun-loving, passive, hippie-like Jesus, Matthew’s Gospel often provides a stark contrast.

As early as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sets out expectations that might seem, to many of us, *unattainable*. He makes clear he didn’t come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, and mentions that even breaking one of the least of the Commandments means you’ve broken them all (see Matthew 5:17-19). We then hear that if you’re angry with your brother or sister, or insult them, you will be liable to judgment (Matthew 5:22), to love your enemies (Matthew 5:44), and be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Matthew’s Gospel, in particular, is greatly concerned with community, and, for a community of Christians, it’s not easy to get off the accountability hook.

. . .

The passage we have before us from Matthew 18, verses 15 to 20, is a well-known one... Well, it should be. It should be, because it’s something we find in things like constitutions, including Hope Lutheran’s, relates to situations we face all the time, and, most importantly, outlines an approach for how we’re to deal with conflict, and

avoid deep-seated anger, resentment, and bitterness. Matthew 18 principles point us towards *reconciliation* as the Body of Christ.

So, this passage shouldn't surprise us. We should have a good idea of what to do. The principles in this passage aren't many, or long, or complicated. There are just three steps.

The problem is Matthew 18 deals with something we really like to ignore, discount, or with what is generally considered less important than other things. Other things might be easier to point out and judge: stealing, adultery, even misusing the Lord's name. Those are the kinds of sins we most often care to point out, and point out quickly. But Christ says that committing one sin is the same as committing them all. And committing one sin isn't just about the *actions* that you do. It's also what you think, what's in your heart, and what you don't intend to do but end up doing anyway, even if you don't even know you did it.

And so, in the Christian community, and in every other community on earth, gossip becomes a big problem, regardless of any other *specific sins* that are gossiped about.

Other sins might cause a quick and big commotion, but the kinds of sin that fester underneath can just as easily chip away at the foundation of human relationships, slowly breaking us apart in even more dangerous and disruptive ways.

Jesus wants sin to come out in the open, to be revealed, and then dealt with. Not publicly to shame one another, but to keep our disagreements from slowly tearing our communities apart. To instead build trust and strengthen relationships. To not hold anger and bitterness deep down inside, but to bring these burdens to him.

So, we have our text.

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are *alone*” (Matthew 18:15).

This is the *first* step, or first principle, but it's not an easy one. We get used to letting our anger and our bitterness fester. We might not like how it causes tightness in our chest, causes us to lose sleep, makes it hard for us to trust others, or has us easily avoid the good of another as we see only bad and bad intentions, but we let it all fester anyway. We think, for some strange reason, all these side effects are better than doing something to change the dynamics, and break the cycle of sin and hurt feelings.

Sometimes, part of following these steps in Matthew 18 is understanding *if* someone actually did sin against you. The truth is, sometimes we certainly feel like this is the case, at first. But, when we're removed from the situation, when we take some time to reflect, we realized that that's probably not case. Jesus isn't telling us to run to anyone anytime you think they may have done something to wrong you. The instruction isn't, "*immediately* when you've been sinned against, ..." Jesus says, "*If*." There's an important condition here.

This first step is hard, and, because it's hard, it usually involves us really trying to understand *if* this person has done what we feel they have, or what we felt *at first*. If we can only answer that we're not really sure, maybe something else is going on. It might be something inside ourselves that caused us to feel this way, or something else, and the answer then shouldn't be to run to tell that person about how you feel you've been wronged. The answer might simply be to go to God, repent ourselves, pray for relief, or seek wise counsel. We always need humility.

But we *do* sin against each other. Constantly. We can't avoid it. Not in this life, at least. *Then*, we have this guidance.

The hope isn't to punish the person who sinned against you. The hope is to *strengthen* the community. To strengthen the community before things slowly tear apart. To *restore* relationships. To be *reconciled* to one another. To *relieve* each other's burdens.

Christ hands out no prizes for those who *hold on* to the most, whether it be possessions, accolades, or grievances. By confronting the person that sinned against you, with gentleness and respect as much as possible, you hope they will acknowledge their sin, repent, and your relationship will be restored. This is also often a good time to repent ourselves, since we're unlikely *fully innocent* in any situation.

Maybe we'll find out they themselves knew what they had done. Maybe they didn't, but the confrontation let them see. Following this first principle is meant to avoid shaming, or belittling, or anything of that nature that might happen when things are shared among a few others, or even publicly to the wider community, before going to the person directly—*alone*. Steps two and three might need to be employed in the end, where others are involved, but don't rush to get there. The goal, again, is reconciliation, not punishment, or any notion of "an eye for an eye."

As we'll look at next week, Jesus calls us to eagerly and readily forgive, just as he has forgiven us. He's very serious about it, and tells a very vivid parable to illustrate what happens when we don't turn and forgive others as we've been forgiven.

And this is good advice when we have sinned against another as well. God doesn't want us to hide from those we've wronged, or avoid them, but go to them directly and repent.

. . .

None of this is easy. This isn't often the way the world works. But this is the work of God.

This confronting one another is not just a principle for us to enact. It's what God has done himself for us in Christ.

We *have* done wrong. We sinned against God in the Beginning, and have continued to choose lesser gods and destructive paths throughout history. Original *community* was broken long ago. Yet God has not left us in our fallen state. Our LORD has not remained high up in the heavens, far away from us. God hasn't left us *unchecked* in our sin. *Christ came down to be with us*. To offer us forgiveness. To restore our relationship with the Creator, and restore our relationships with each other through him.

The LORD sending God's Son to be with us *and* confront us is a gracious and loving act. Jesus came down because God wants to be with us, wants to be one with us, and for us to find peace in Him. God wants us to be part of the Lord's healing and restoration mission. But none of this is easy. It wasn't even for Christ himself. He suffered and died for us to be reconciled to God and each other. And it certainly isn't easy for us either, though to a much lesser extent. It's hard work. It takes time. It involves uncomfortable conversations, humility, and vulnerability, but the results are often greater belonging, intimacy, joy, and shared *purpose*. It involves less tightness in your chest, and less bitterness.

. . .

Hopefully you've seen this first principle from Matthew 18 at work in your own life, and experienced its fruits. I know I have.

The incident that I'm often reminded of, when considering Matthew 18 or just situations I encounter where I've been wronged, done the wronging, or hear of others

in a situation like these, was while I was in Mongolia of all places (between Russia and China).

I was there with other students as part of the second-year leadership program at the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute in Camrose.

Living in dorms full of immature young adults creates enough opportunities for Matthew 18 principles to come to bear, and I know I *should have* followed them many times that I did not. But on this trip for Intentional Ministry, Prayer, and Cultural Training (IMPACT for short) our team, created by the staff, seemed to be set-up for disaster. Why? Because it was made up of six blonde Scandinavians.

Although we had been together at the Bible school for twelve months over two years at this point, none of us were the best of friends. They do this on purpose. You don't go on these IMPACT trips with your best friends, and you learn not to expect it. You don't go with your best friends because it's not a vacation, and the staff doesn't want to encourage that. The trip was meant to be hard, and forced you to learn to work together.

But, as you might imagine, if you know anything about Scandinavians in general, the six of us were quite good being passive aggressive in particular. We could hold in our feelings, whether sadness, anger, joy, or anything else, better than anyone. And the six of us passive aggressive Scandinavians, living in small apartment in Mongolia, in January—the wonderful gift to be the only team sent to another cold and snowy place for the January trip while all the others brought their shorts and t-shirts to their trips—made it highly likely that things might blow.

Yes, we still centred our time around having devotions and prayer-time together, but we were also living together for the first time. We had to go to strange-to-us stores and markets, plan and cook meals with what we could find, and deal with each other's quirks. We had to share one bathroom among the six of us, and we were three guys and three girls.

It was an adjustment.

But people are often most passionate about food. This was the main reason that me and another guy on the trip started to get on each other's nerves. We had no natural leader in the group, and weren't well organized because of it. Food preferences quickly became difficult to coordinate.

To his credit, this other guy was the pickiest, but also the best at voicing his preferences. He had just enough German blood to be less passive than the rest. Diversity in groups is important. Yet tensions grew fast. I just thought he was being difficult. Getting into the details isn't important, but him and I weren't happy with each other.

Yet, while I was being very passive-aggressive, this other guy was saintlier than myself. He was a newer Christian, and, as is often the case, was more eager to follow and understand God's Word. I, on the other hand, knew well how to sit in my anger. My personality type is known for being both afraid of and repressing anger. It's a problem I'm trying to work on more now. But he was better than me. He knew things needed to stop for us to focus on the more important work and experience we were in Mongolia to have. Being passive aggressive, or just aggressive, wasn't going to create the best trip for anyone.

So, still towards the beginning of the month-long trip, he called me into the kitchen, and called me out. He knew I had a problem with him, and that I was choosing not to do or say anything about it, other than being passive aggressive at every turn. So, he forced us to air our grievances. He wouldn't let me get away very easily, and had some very valid concerns about myself too.

The result wasn't more tension. It wasn't the first of many fights. It was, instead, the opposite. It was a better mutual understanding, partnership, and way forward. The tension subsided.

We also hadn't hung out much before, but became close. I was honestly astonished by the love he showed for calling me out one-on-one, and for just how much it did to relieve tension among us, build trust, and refocus us on why we were there.

The two of us could communicate much more openly after that, and work better together. We also became good friends, and still are more than ten years later. We were even in each other's wedding parties.

. . . .

I wish I could say I've since abided by Matthew 18 principles at every turn, but I haven't. Not nearly often enough. But in any situation like this, I'm always reminded of my friend calling me out.

There are two more steps outlined in Matthew 18, but we won't dive into them today. Today, let's all try, as hard as it is, to focus on this *first step* as best as we can. It's

even harder to do during this pandemic. We can't even share a sign of peace and reconciliation during worship like we'd prefer to do. But this hard work is worth the effort. It helps to create stronger, more loving communities, where people sense they truly belong, and find freedom in that.

We will fail along the way, so we continue to look to Christ, seek forgiveness, and receive it freely, over and over again.

We look more closely at Christ's instructions for us to offer forgiveness freely next week.

For now, may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

## HYMN OF THE DAY - ELW #707 – *Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us*



1 Lord of glo - ry, you have bought us with your life - blood  
2 Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you glad - ly, free - ly,  
3 Won - drous hon - or you have giv - en to our hum - blest  
4 Lord of glo - ry, you have bought us with your life - blood



as the price, nev - er grudg - ing for the lost ones that tre -  
of your own. With the sun - shine of your good - ness melt our  
char - i - ty in your own mys - te - rious sen - tence, "You have  
as the price, nev - er grudg - ing for the lost ones that tre -



men - dous sac - ri - fice; and with that have free - ly giv - en  
thank - less hearts of stone till our cold and self - ish na - tures,  
done it all to me." Na - ked, sick, in pris - on, hun - gry—  
men - dous sac - ri - fice. Give us faith to trust you bold - ly,



bles - sings count - less as the sand to the un - thank - ful  
warmed by you, at length be - lieve that more hap - py  
in the least, your face we view, say - ing by your  
hope, to stay our souls on you: but, oh, best of



and the e - vil with your own un - spar - ing hand.  
and more bless - ed 'tis to give than to re - ceive.  
poor and need - y, "Give as I have giv'n to you."  
all your grac - es, with your love our love re - new.

Text: Eliza S. Alderson, 1818–1889, alt.

Music: HYFRYDOL, Rowland H. Prichard, 1811–1887

## THE APOSTLE'S CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.**

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic Church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting. Amen**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Let us pray for the church, the world, and all people according to their need.

O dear Lord, why do we always get these hard readings on a holiday weekend? We want to take a break from talk of sin and reconciliation, discipline and hard conversations. Please help us to thank you for the guidance and promise your Son gives us, even in such awkward encounters. And fill us with your Spirit, so we are equipped to put into practice what Jesus has given us for such times.

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

Make your Church courageous in warning people of their sinfulness, and humble in confessing its own sin. Help it to graciously offer forgiveness to any who turn to you. Give it the lovely righteousness of your Son, and make it his dwelling-place, and an outpost of your Kingdom.

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

Hear the prayers of your faithful people who suffer persecution, torture and even death because of Christ. Do not let the waters of hatred overwhelm them; and grant them grace to persevere in faithfulness.

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

Bless this congregation with humility, gentleness, and wisdom. Help us to speak even hard truth with such love, that others seek the forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation and life that comes from Christ.

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

Lord, there are families, congregations, and communities in which people have hurt one another badly. We struggle with betrayal; anger; and hatred. We need encouragement to confess and repent when we have done wrong. We need courage to forgive when we have been wronged. We need help to relearn trust and concord.

Refresh us with your Spirit; nourish us with your Word; and bestow on us such grace and mercy in Jesus Christ that we may accomplish those things that are needful, to your glory and for the sake of their fellowship.

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

You have given great honor to those entrusted with worldly power and authority. Give them also the wisdom to know that they must give an account of their stewardship to you, the King and Lord of all nations. And give them the desire and the strength to accomplish your will for the good of all people entrusted to their care. Teach us how to settle differences peacefully; and to act honourably, speak respectfully, and live justly.

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

There are so many people whose lives are shadowed by suffering! We lift their names before you, especially Adeline; Karen; Chris; Clarence; Irma; Bob; Gordon; David; Art; Paul; Otto; Betty Jo; Ewald; Joseph; Louise; Mona; Pastor Richard; Tim; Debbie; Roland; and all those we now name in our hearts. . . . Grant them health, hope, guidance, and the joy of your presence in their lives. Fill all who care for them with compassion; and bestow your salvation upon them all.

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

Heavenly Father, before our Gospel reading, Jesus talks about becoming like little children. We thank you for your “little ones” who, though they have died to this world, live eternally in your embrace, including Ed Bartel, Gordon Hughes, and Alan Delorme. Give us the grace to live as your little ones, too. Help us to trust and obey you. Help us to aid, warn, and forgive each other. Give us your mercy, and for Jesus’ sake, lead us into your Kingdom. Grant us the joy of seeing your face and of worshipping you in the company of all you have redeemed.

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

Conform our prayers to the heart of Jesus, hear them through the interceding of your Holy Spirit, and grant them in accordance with your gracious will. Amen.

## **PEACE**

*(If you are with someone and are able, please share the Peace of Christ with them in an appropriate manner)*

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

## **THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray:

**O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.**

## **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;  
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.**

## **BLESSING**

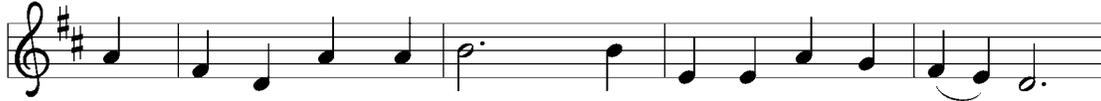
**The LORD bless us and keep us.**

**The LORD make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious to us**

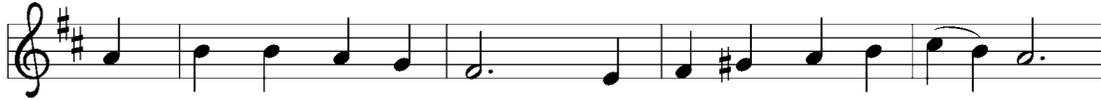
**The LORD lift up his countenance upon us, and ✝ give us peace.**

**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG - ELW #806 – *O God, My Faithful God***



1 O God, my faith - ful God, true foun-tain ev - er flow - ing,  
2 Give me the strength to do with read - y heart and will - ing  
3 Keep me from say - ing words that lat - er need re - call - ing;  
4 When dan-gers gath - er round, oh, keep me calm and fear - less;



with - out whom noth - ing is, all per - fect gifts be - stow - ing;  
what - ev - er you com - mand, my call - ing here ful - fill - ing—  
guard me, lest i - dle speech may from my lips be fall - ing;  
help me to bear the cross when life seems dark and cheer - less;



give me a health - y frame, and may I have with - in  
to do it when I ought, with all my might—and bless  
but when, with - in my place, I must and ought to speak,  
help me, as you have taught, to love both great and small,



a con - science free from blame, a soul un - stained by sin.  
what - ev - er I have wrought, for you must give suc - cess.  
then to my words give grace, lest I of - fend the weak.  
and, by your Spir - it's might, to live at peace with all.

Text: Johann Heermann, 1585–1647; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.  
Music: WAS FRAG ICH NACH DER WELT, Ahasuerus Fritsch, 1629–1701

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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**READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK: Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35.**

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