ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



October 18, 2026

10 a.m.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com, Email http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

Katharine Gossman, Music Director Rita Ford, Office Manager

All Members, Ministers

Welcome, Everyone!

We are glad to have you with us this morning. If you need assistance in finding anything, one of our ushers will be glad to help you.

Restrooms are found in the fellowship hall and office building to the right as you exit the sanctuary. Proceed up the stairs and through the glass door. Unisex bathrooms are available through the kitchen in the office area**.**

"Let the Little Children Come" Matthew 19:14 - In accordance with St. Stephen's mission "to be a welcoming community . . ." we encourage all ages to worship on Sundays. We also believe that children learn to welcome others by how they have been welcomed. If you are a parent of a young child, know that this community supports your efforts to engage your child in worship and understands that it can be a stressful process. Having children in worship is a joy that we treasure, so please know that we welcome you and your children as they learn to become active members in Christ's body.

Please remember to turn off your cell phone during the liturgy**.**

All the hymns for the worship service are in the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship book and numbered by hymn, not page.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation that explicitly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. St. Stephen is equally committed to anti-racism. We welcome people without regard to race, ethnicity, age, family status, economic status, or differing abilities.

All are invited to receive the sacrament. Lutherans believe that Jesus Christ is present in, with and under the consecrated bread and wine of Holy Communion. Those not wishing to commune are welcome to the altar to receive a blessing. To indicate this, please cross your arms over your chest. If you are not able to come forward, please inform the ushers and the meal will be brought to you.

INTRODUCTION

In today's first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



+ GATHERING +

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

C Amen.

P Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

Silence for reflection.
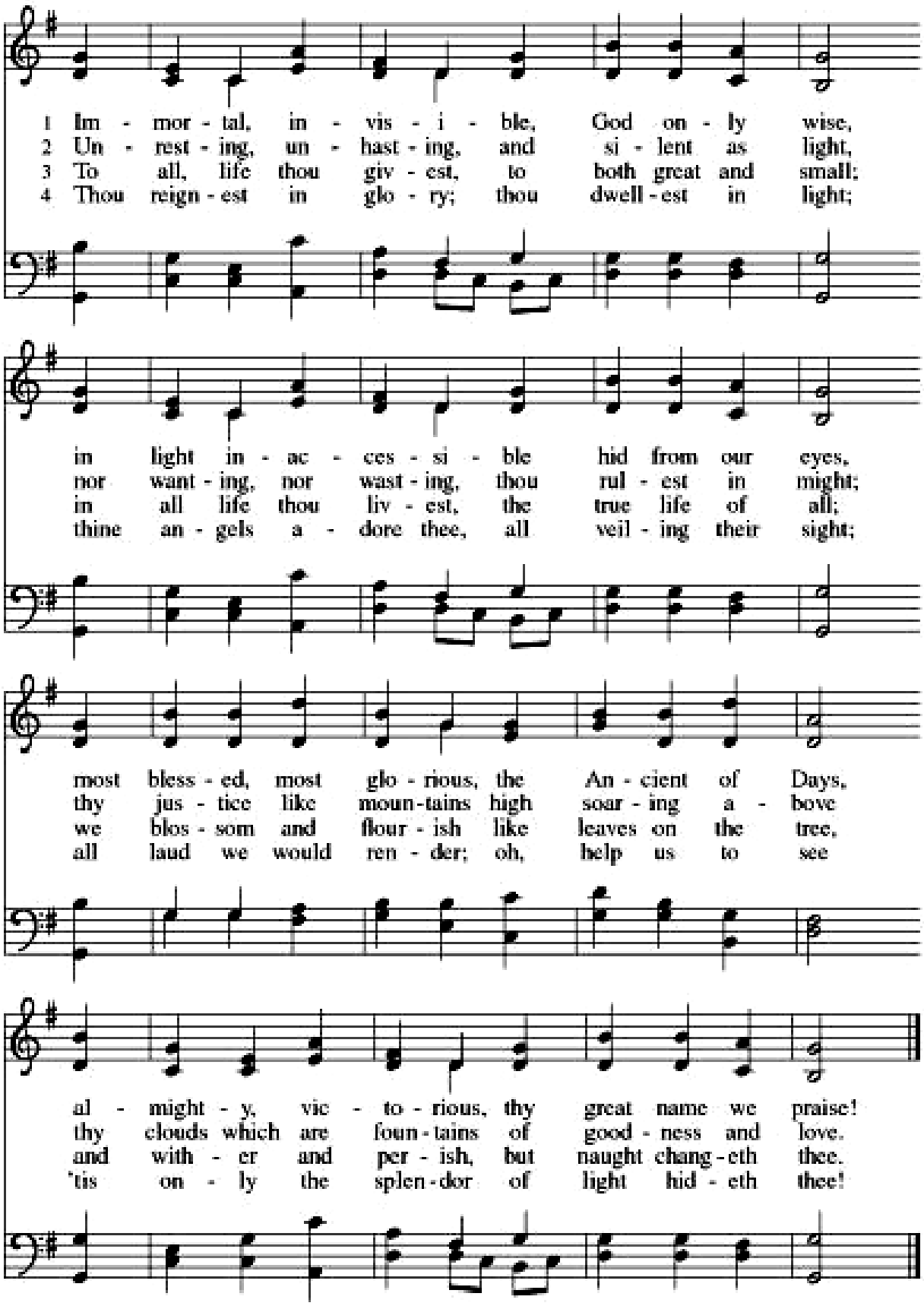
P Compassionate God,

C we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

P Hear this good news: We have peace with God through ☩ Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

C Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 834 *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*
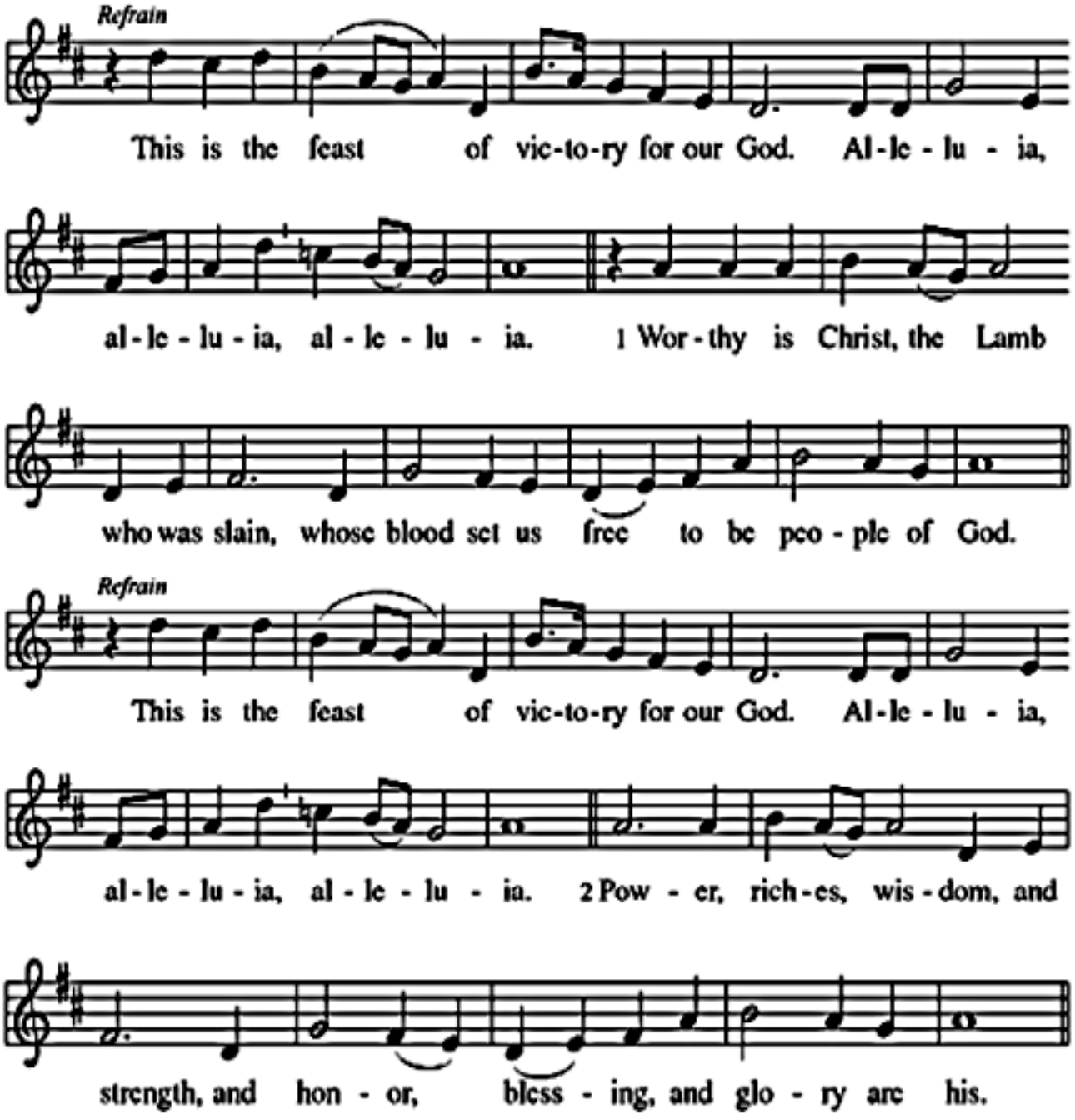


Text: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824–1908, alt.
Music: ST. DENIO, Welsh traditional; arr. John Roberts, 1807–1876
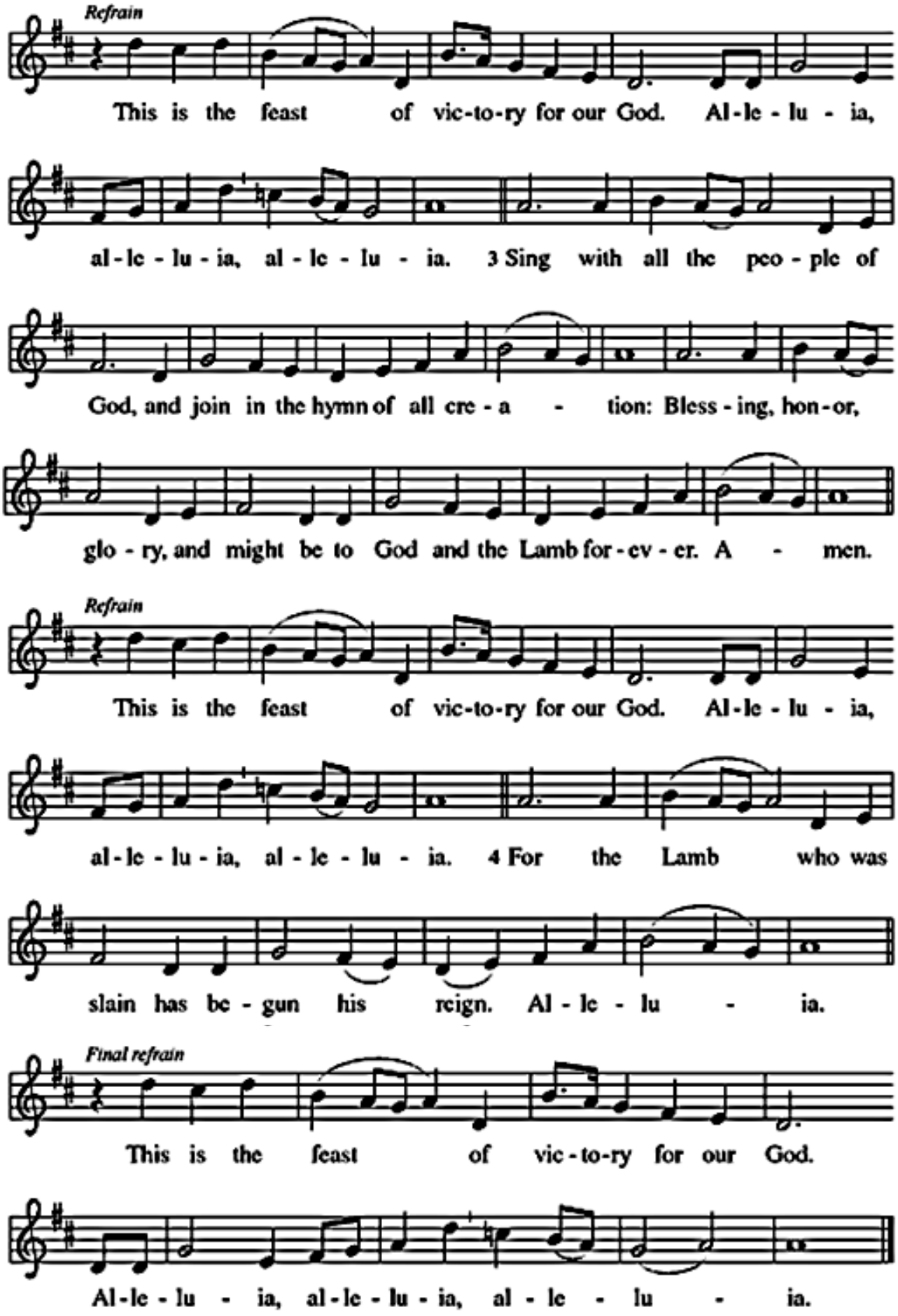
GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE




Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 3 Sing with all the peo-ple of
God, and join in the hymn of all cre-a-tion: Bless-ing, hon-or,
glo-ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A-men.
Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 4 For the Lamb who was
slain has be-gun his reign. Al-le-lu-ia.
Final refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY



P Let us pray.

Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S TIME



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Isaiah 45:1-7

The prophet announces that Cyrus the Persian emperor is the one the Lord has anointed to end Israel's exile. The Lord makes this choice so that the whole world will recognize this Lord as the only God. Persia had a god of light and a god of darkness; the Lord claims sovereignty over both light and darkness.

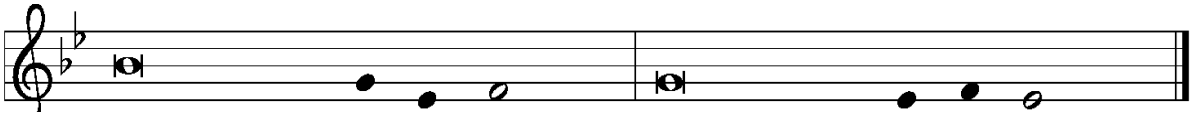
1 Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations
before him and to strip kings of their robes, to open doors before him—and the gates shall not be
closed:

2 I will go before you and level the mountains; I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut
through the bars of iron; 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret
places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
4 For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name; I give you a title,
though you do not know me. 5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god. I
arm you, though you do not know me, 6 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and
from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7 I form light
and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13] *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader [1] Sing to the Lord | a new song;
sing to the Lord, | all the earth.

C [2] **Sing to the Lord, bless the name | of the Lord;**
proclaim God's salvation from | day to day.

L [3] Declare God's glory a- | mong the nations
and God's wonders a- | mong all peoples.

C [4] **For great is the Lord and greatly | to be praised,**
more to be feared | than all gods.

L [5] As for all the gods of the nations, they | are but idols;
but you, O Lord, have | made the heavens.

C [6] **Majesty and magnificence are | in your presence;**
power and splendor are in your | sanctuary.

L [7] Ascribe to the Lord, you families | of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord hon- | or and power.

C [8] **Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the | holy name;**
bring offerings and enter the courts | of the Lord.

L [9] Worship the Lord in the beau- | ty of holiness;
tremble before the Lord, | all the earth.

C [10] **Tell it out among the nations: "The | Lord is king!**
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will
judge the peo- | ples with equity."

L [11] Let the heavens rejoice, and let the | earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that | is therein.

C [12] **Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your com- | ing, O Lord,**
for you come to | judge the earth.

L [13] You will judge the | world with righteousness
and the peoples | with your truth.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Most likely this letter is the first written by Paul. Paul gives pastoral encouragement and reassurances to new Christians living in an antagonistic environment. Their commitment of faith, love, and hope makes them a model for other new Christian communities.

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.
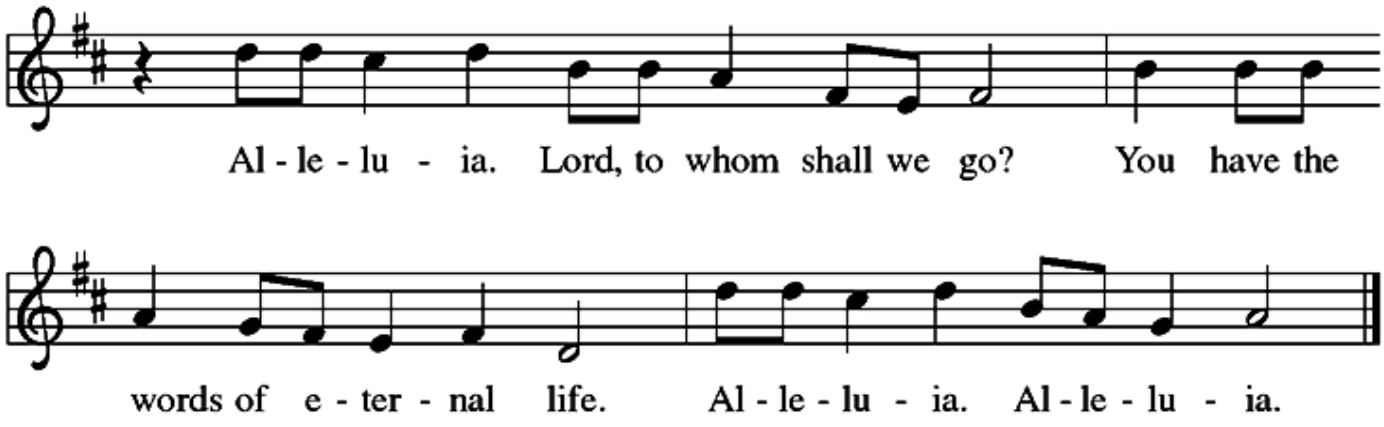
2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly
3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness
of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has
chosen you, 5 because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only but also in power
and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved
to be among you for your sake. 6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of
persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example
to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth
from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith in God has become
known, so that we have no need to speak about it. 9 For they report about us what kind of
welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true
God 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues
us from the coming wrath.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Matthew 22:15-22

After Jesus begins teaching in the temple, religious leaders try to trap him with questions. First they ask if God's people should pay taxes to an earthly tyrant like Caesar.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew, the twenty second chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

15 The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. 16 So they sent their disciples
to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the
way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one, for you do not regard
people with partiality. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"
18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?
19 Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. 20 Then he said to them,
"Whose head is this and whose title?" 21 They answered, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Give
therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." 22 When
they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.
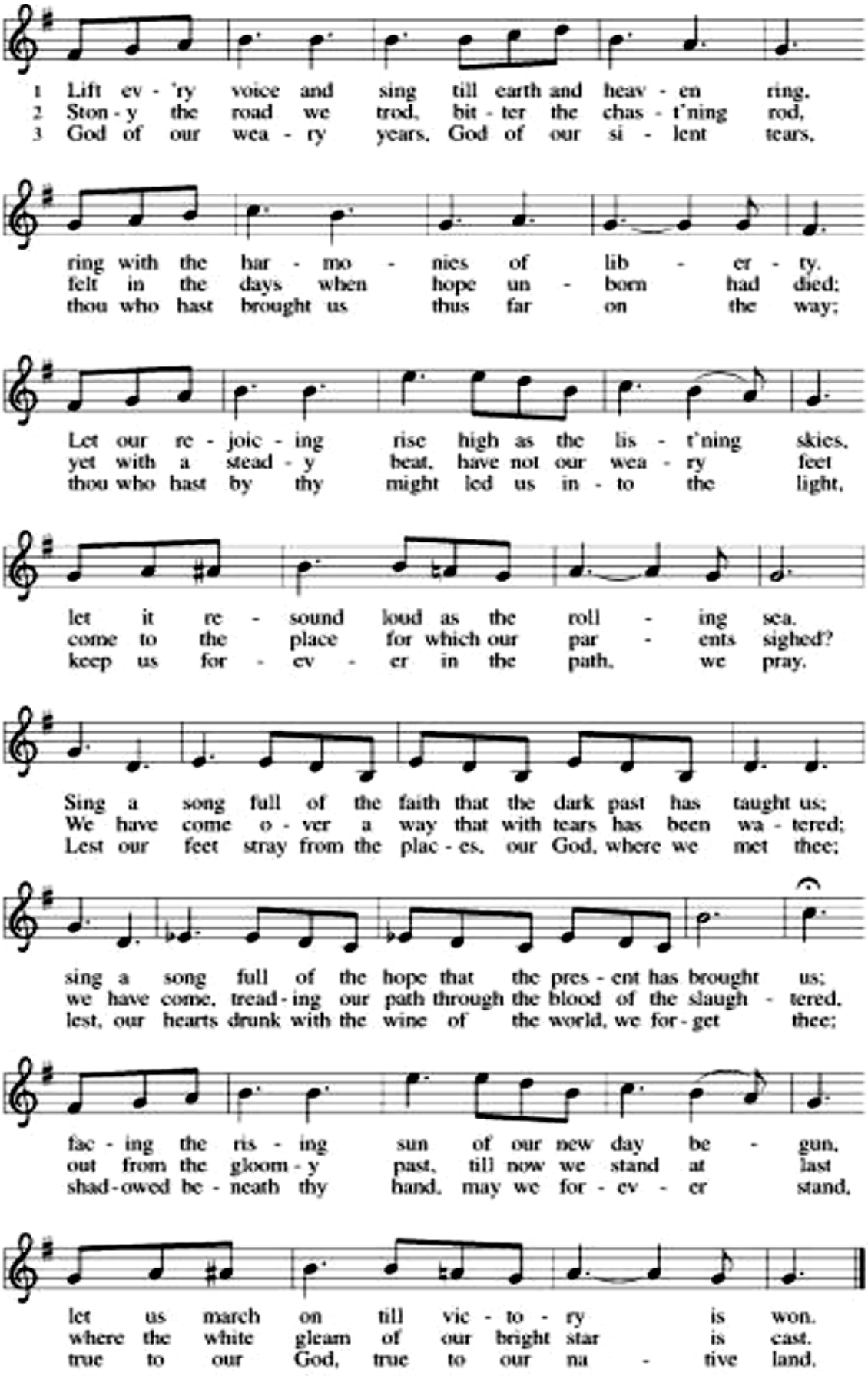
The assembly is seated.

SERMON *We encounter the living word of God in the preaching.*

Quiet reflection.

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 841 *Lift Every Voice and Sing*



Text: James W. Johnson, 1871–1938
Music: LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING, J. Rosamond Johnson, 1873–1954

APOSTLES' CREED

A Let us confess our faith.

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come 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

Seeking the Spirit of God who makes all things new, we pray for the church and the world.

(A brief silence)

Living God, you inspire us to share the message of God's love through Jesus Christ. Send forth your Spirit to seminarians and those beginning ordained ministry. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We give you thanks for oceans. Protect the abundant sea life and sustain the work of those who preserve them. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We seek your wisdom in all things, and you are the shaper of the world. Direct all people who hold authority. Sometimes what is legal is not moral. Help us in discernment. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for all who work in dangerous environments. For nurses, hospital staff, and doctors, we pray. Heal all who are sick, injured, or suffering. St. Stephen, who else would welcome our prayers today?
(Pause for people to speak petitions.)
Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We ask your blessing on those who do the quiet, unseen work of the church. We pray for the Church Council and for your Spirit to be at work in our meeting today. Encourage all of us in our work of faith and labor of love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

A few at a time, each week, we pray for people within the St. Stephen worship community. We pray today for Mike Martinez, Nancy Staff, Daniel and Jaime and for their extended families. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We thank you for our ancestors who have been called home to you. Remind us of their presence with us through your Spirit. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Trusting in your boundless grace, O God, we lift up these spoken prayers and those in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN!

The peace of Christ be with you, always!
And also with you!

Let us share the peace of God with one another.



+ MEAL +

Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint

venmo

Use this QR Code to connect to Venmo for a donation to St. Stephen. Code 5469.

OFFERING

An offering is presented for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

ANTHEM *"Jesus, Feed Us" - Makeever, arr Wentzel*

Bread of life, our host and meal,
Jesus, feed us.
Christ, by faith, to see and feel,
feed us with your love.

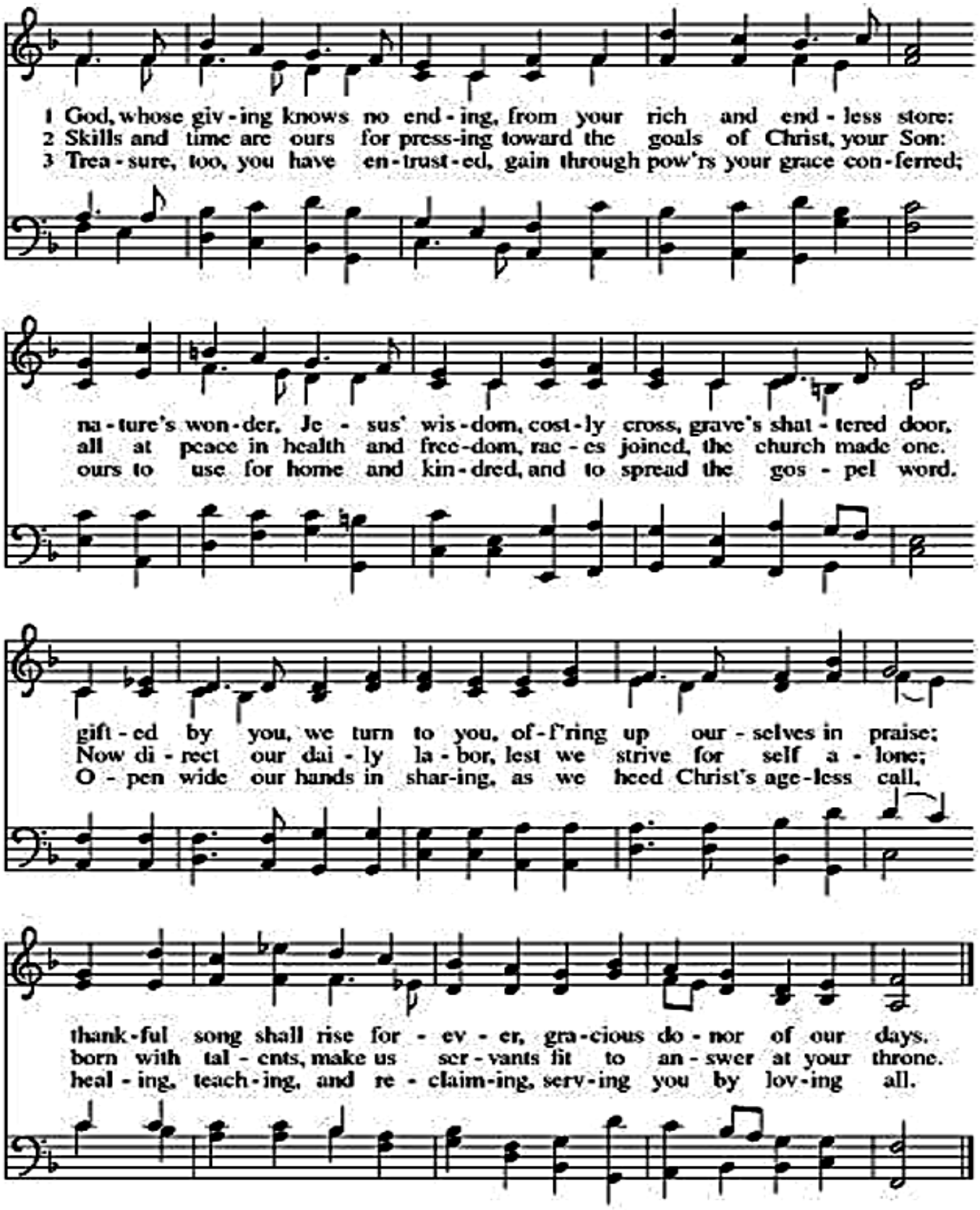
Bread now break and wine now pour,
Jesus, feed us.
Make us one, our hope restore;
feed us with your love.

Grant forgiveness in the feast-
Jesus, feed us.
For the greatest and the least;
feed us with your love.

Thank you for this gift we share.
Jesus, feed us.
Save God's children ev'rywhere;
feed us with your love.

OFFERING HYMN **ELW 678** *God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending (vs.1-2)*

The assembly stands to sing the offering hymn as the collection and the gifts are brought forward.



Text: Robert L. Edwards, 1915–2006
Music: RUSTINGTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.
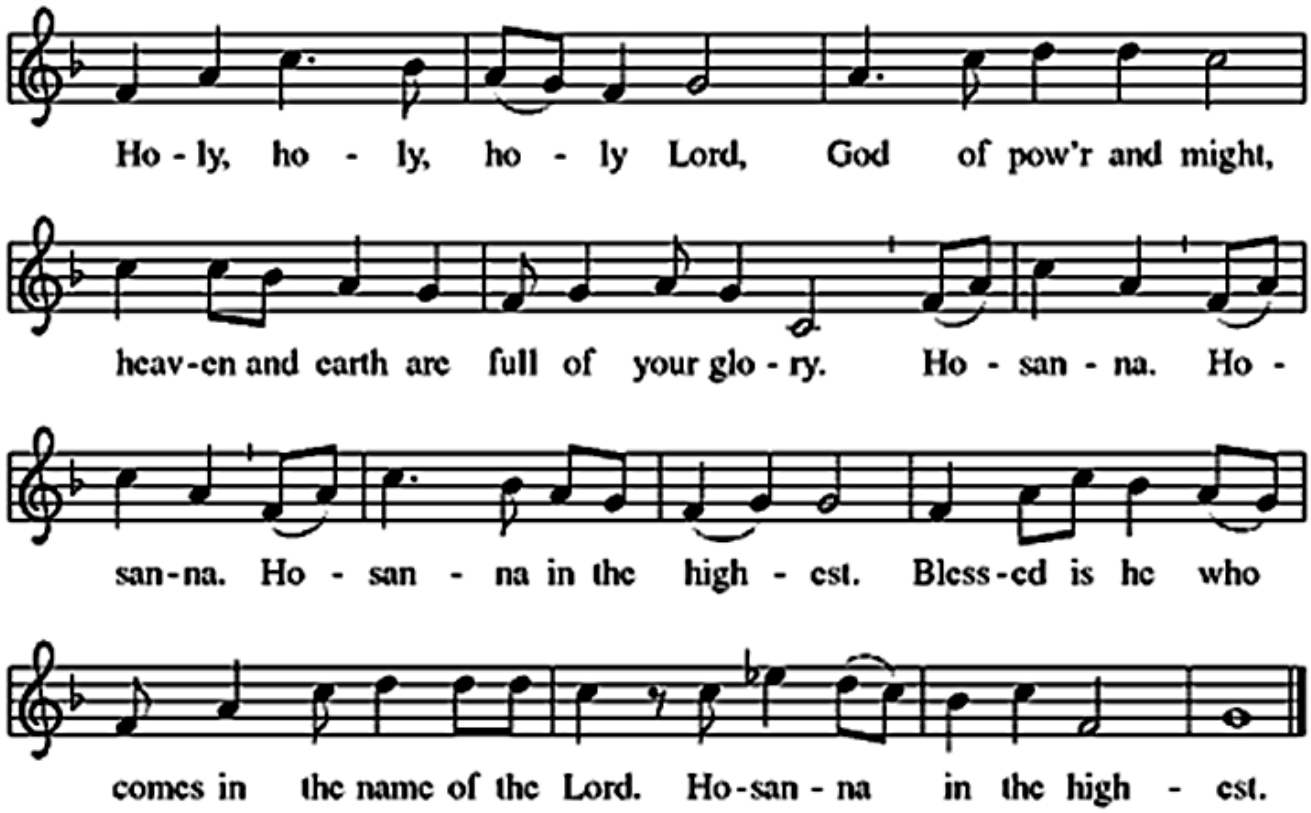
C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



The presiding minister continues to give thanks.

P In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread,
and gave thanks; broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying: Take and eat;
this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

C Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray.
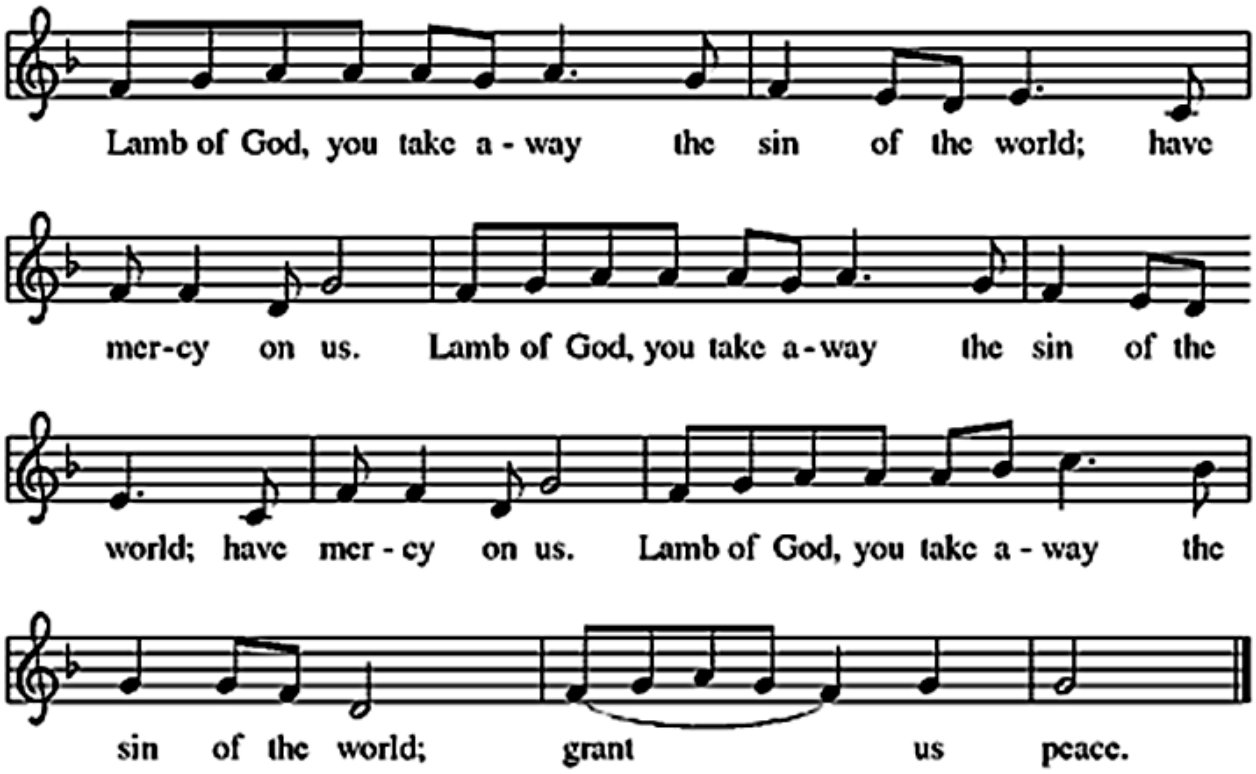
C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Christ invites you to this table. All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

The assembly is seated.

LAMB OF GOD



DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION
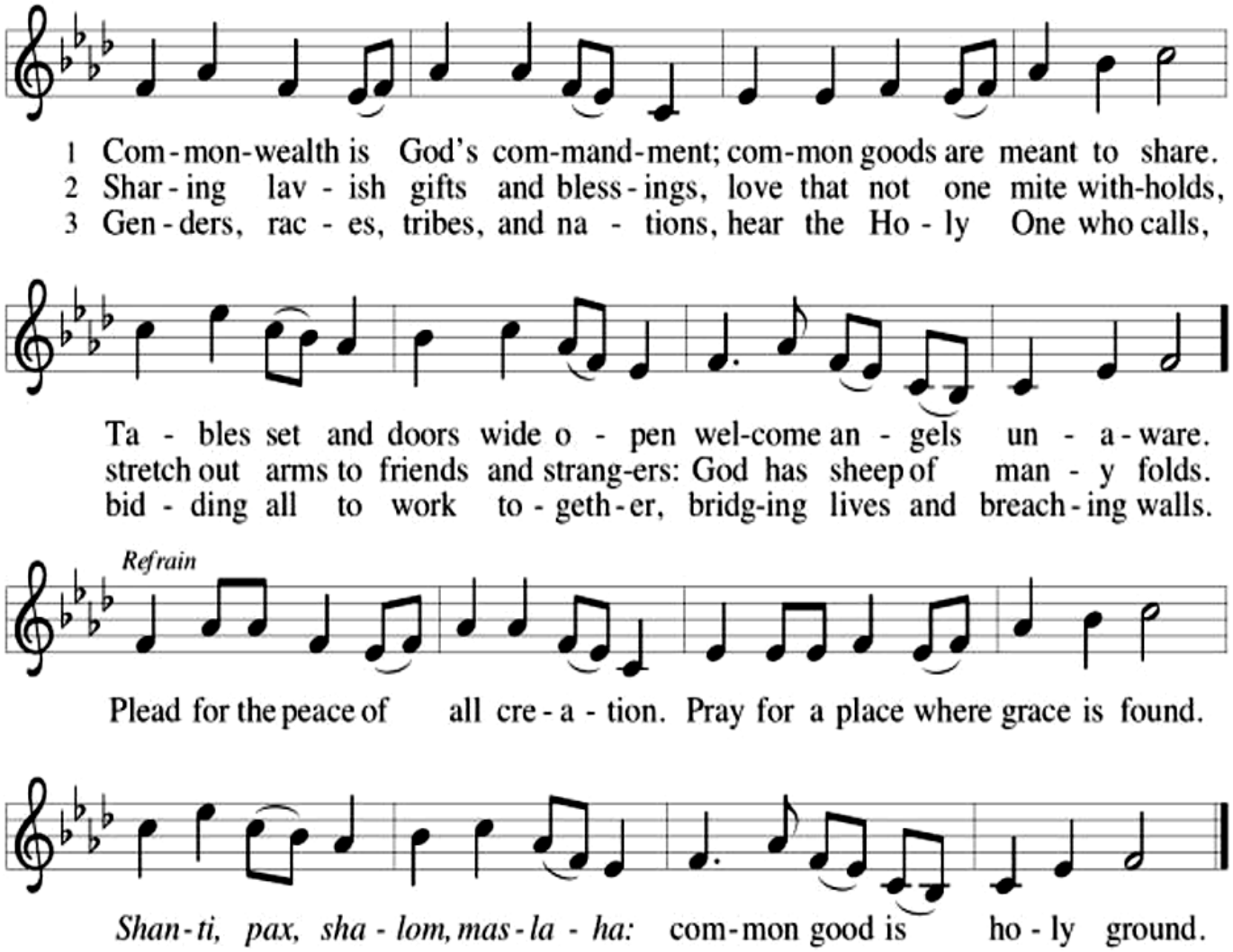
As the ushers direct you, come to the altar using the side aisles and return to your seat via the central aisle. The assisting ministers offer both wine (first) and grape juice (second) from pouring cups. Take a communion glass from one of the trays at the corners as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the lower rail. Wheat-free wafers are available, simply tell the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS **ACS 1036** *Commonwealth is God's Commandment* ⇨

ELW 690 *We Raise Our Hands to You, O Lord*

The assembly stands.

COMMUNION HYMNS **ACS 1036** *Commonwealth is God's Commandment*



Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953
Music: RESTORATION, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835
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PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The assembly stands.

+ SENDING +

BLESSING *We receive the blessings of the triune God.*

P The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus.

C Amen.

The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit.

C Amen.

The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever.

C Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW 705 *God of Grace and God of Glory* ⇨

DISMISSAL

A We believe out loud that God's mission for us is:

C to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.
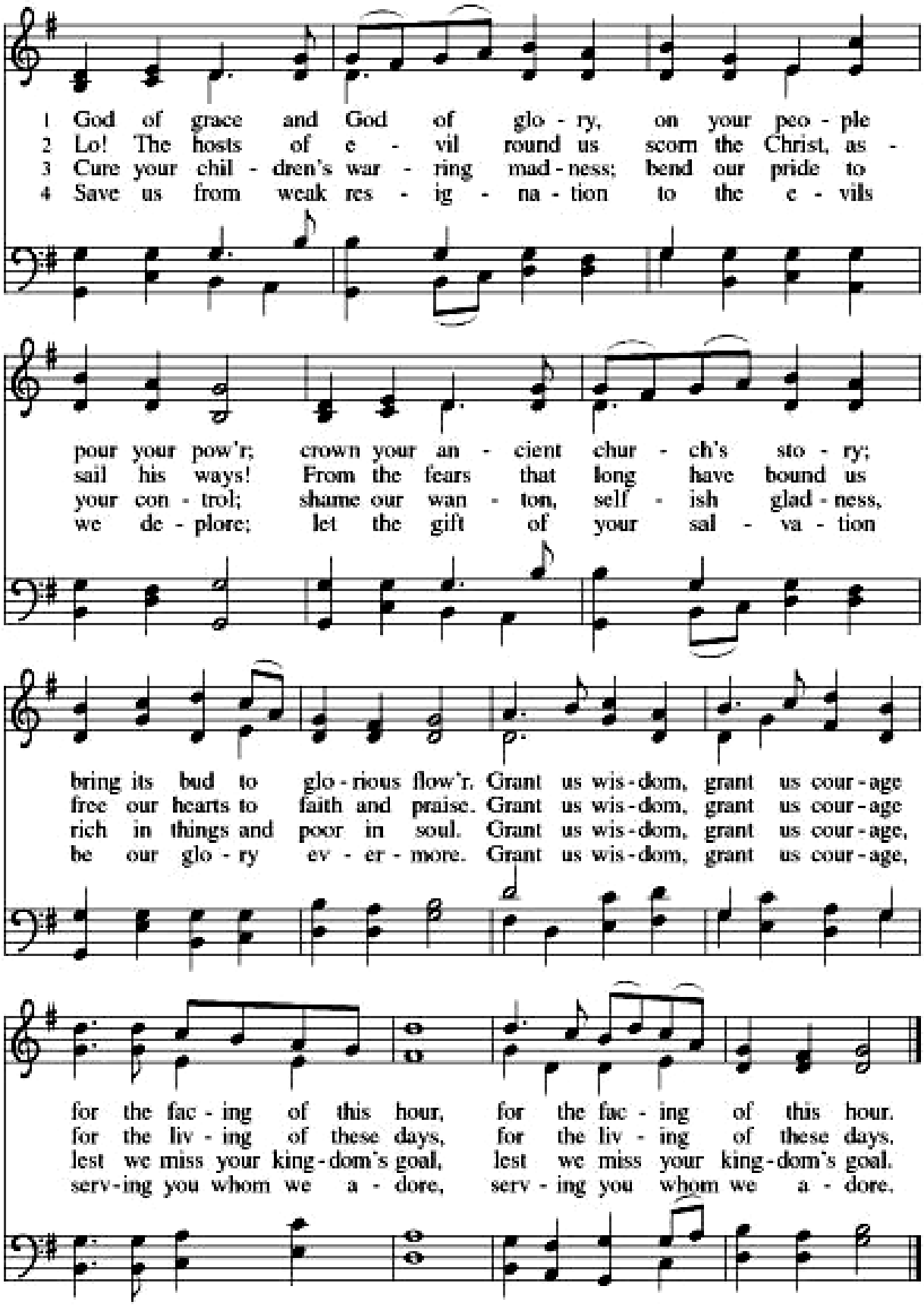
A Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C Thanks be to God!

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416
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SENDING HYMN ELW 705 *God of Grace and God of Glory*

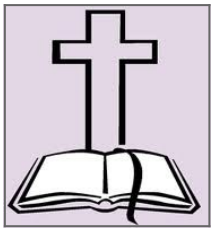


Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878–1969
Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1873–1932



Today's altar flowers are dedicated to the Glory of God

Next Sunday's Readings, Twenty second Sunday after Pentecost:



Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18
Psalm 1
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8
Matthew 22:34-46

SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, Austin Cowan, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Alison Haney, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Olivia James, Lawana Lamb-Daniels, Graham Reece, Jen Reece, Donna Schiffer, Simone Schuster, Sylvia Smith, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White.

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Serving	October 18	October 25
Assisting Minister	Jen Dritt	Rob Schiffer
Cup Minister	Beth Alexander	Colleen Holdcraft
Cantor	Rudy Hehn	Simone Schuster
Lector	Jennifer Slusarz	Erik Robinson
Acolyte		
Tech Team	Emery Oates Caroline Collins	Sandy Lamb-Daniels Caroline Collins
Ushers	Ann DelRossi Jan Harrison	Audrey Post Jacob Nallapu
Altar Guild	Sandy Lamb-Daniels Lawana Lamb-Daniels	Beth Alexander
Counters	Loraine Sundberg Marilyn Larson	Janet Barber Susan Warren

PRAYER REQUESTS

For the sick: Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White); Laura McDuffie (sister of Rob Schiffer).

In treatment for cancer: Matthew Canning (son of Sue and Mark Canning); Scott Simmons (son of Sharon Simmons); Gordon Fleischer; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; David McManus (friend of Audrey Post); Shannon Miller (friend of Barb ODonnell).

Health and protection: For Frank "Rame" Meyers, in long-term care. For those encountering fear & uncertainty around government cuts and the future of Medicaid. For immigrants and refugees who are working and raising families in the United States, that they may be safe and secure without unnecessary deportations.

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: Joann Stomberg (friend of Margaret Bowers), after the death of her husband; Jayden Schiffer (grandson of Rob and Donna Schiffer), experiencing unresolved and serious digestive problems; Pr. Trixie Richter (friend of Cheryl), on the unexpected death of her husband, Adrian; St. Philip Lutheran Church, Mt. Dora, as they grieve their pastor's loss; Cheryl Stuart and family, following the death of her friend Linda Bobbit; Charlie Cogswell, son of Judee Light, for continued healing; Haley Larsen (daughter of Rob Schiffer's cousin), experiencing serious gastrointestinal problems; Sharon Simmons and family, following the death of her sister, Sue Berent; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Walt Steinvorth (friend of Rob Schiffer), suffering from pericarditis and vestibular neuritis and learning to cope with dizziness and severe equilibrium problems; Karen Elizabeth Olson.

Church concerns: St. Stephen Church Council; the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council; all congregations searching for ways to stay connected and proclaim the Good News; Reconciling Works; Bishops Pedro Suarez and Yehiel Curry; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA advocacy offices and ministry.

World concerns: For all people suffering and/or recovering from hurricanes; migrants and asylum seekers; civil rights for people around the world; a ceasefire in Ethiopia and in Ukraine; peace in Gaza and the Middle East.

Calendar for October 18 - October 25

Oct.	18	Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
			9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
			10:00 am	Worship, Twenty first Sunday after Pentecost
			11:30 am	Church council meeting
	21	Wed.	6:00 pm	Confirmation for adults
			7:00 pm	Choir rehearsal
	22	Thurs.	10:00 am	Bible study
Oct.	25	Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
			9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
			10:00 am	Worship, Twenty first Sunday after Pentecost

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALL SAINTS: We are now accepting names of loved ones for remembrance during the All Saints service on Nov. 1. Please email or call Rita with names by Wednesday, Oct. 28.

FLOWER CHART FOR 2026: Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you would like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service by signing up for the 2026 Flower Chart located in the narthex. The cost is $40, and you can place it in the offering plate.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: Want to read a sermon you missed? Visit ***https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters***. Want to read the latest newsletters? Go to ***https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters***. Want to browse a collection of St. Stephen songs? They're at ***https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters***

CHURCH COUNCIL	
President, Denise Bookwalter	
Treasurer, Jennifer Dritt	**Buildings Coordinator,** Sandy Lamb-Daniels
Worship & Music, Susan Hehn	**Grounds Coordinator,** Rob Schiffer
Care & Hospitality, Lawana Lamb-Daniels	**Outreach,** Sharon Simmons
Mutual Ministry, Sylvia Smith	**Education & Discipleship,** Emily Stover
Communications, Colleen Holdcraft	**Youth,** Graham Reece