St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost



October 11, 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 Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.

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.

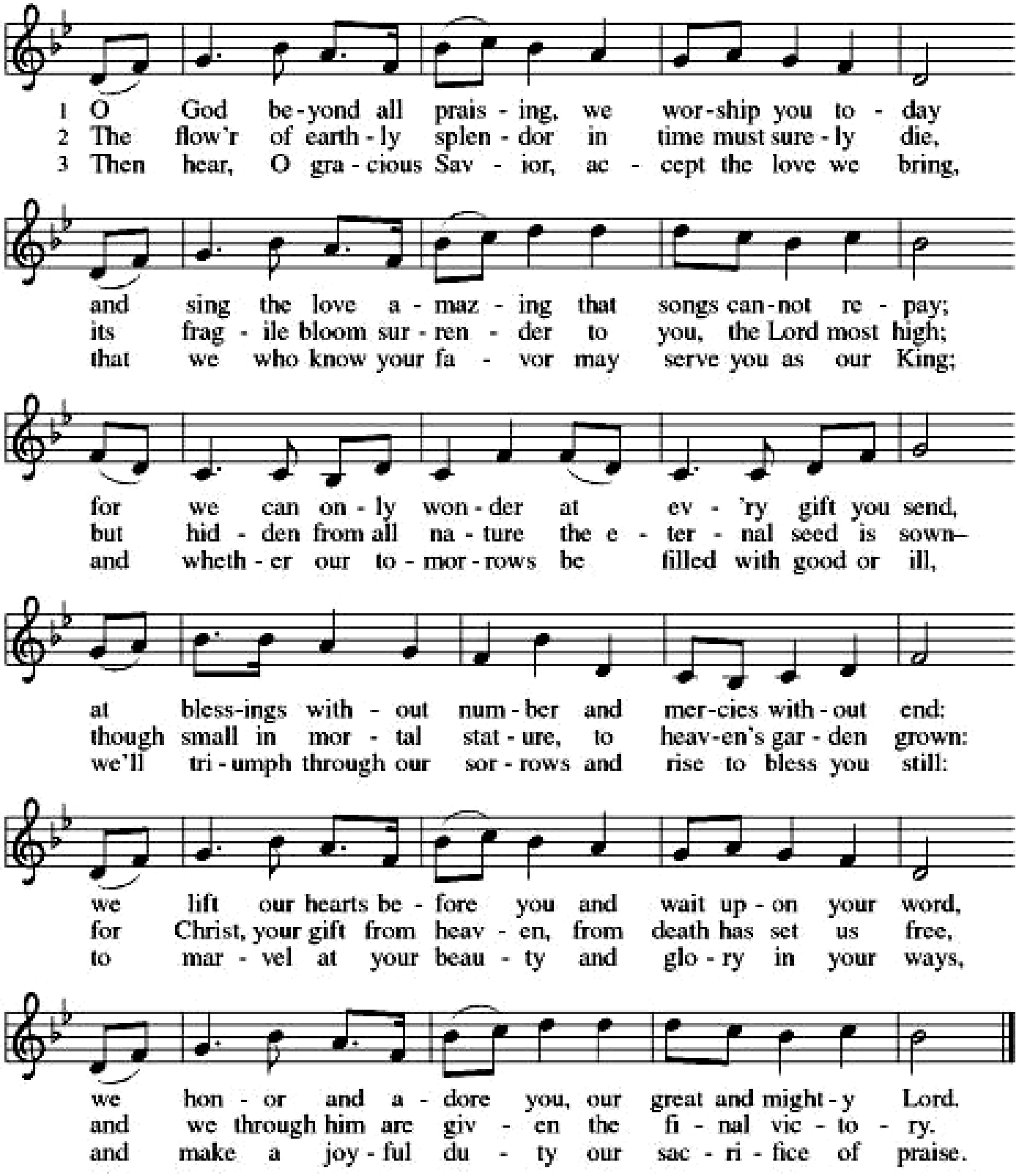
P Compassionate God,

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 880 *O God beyond All Praising*
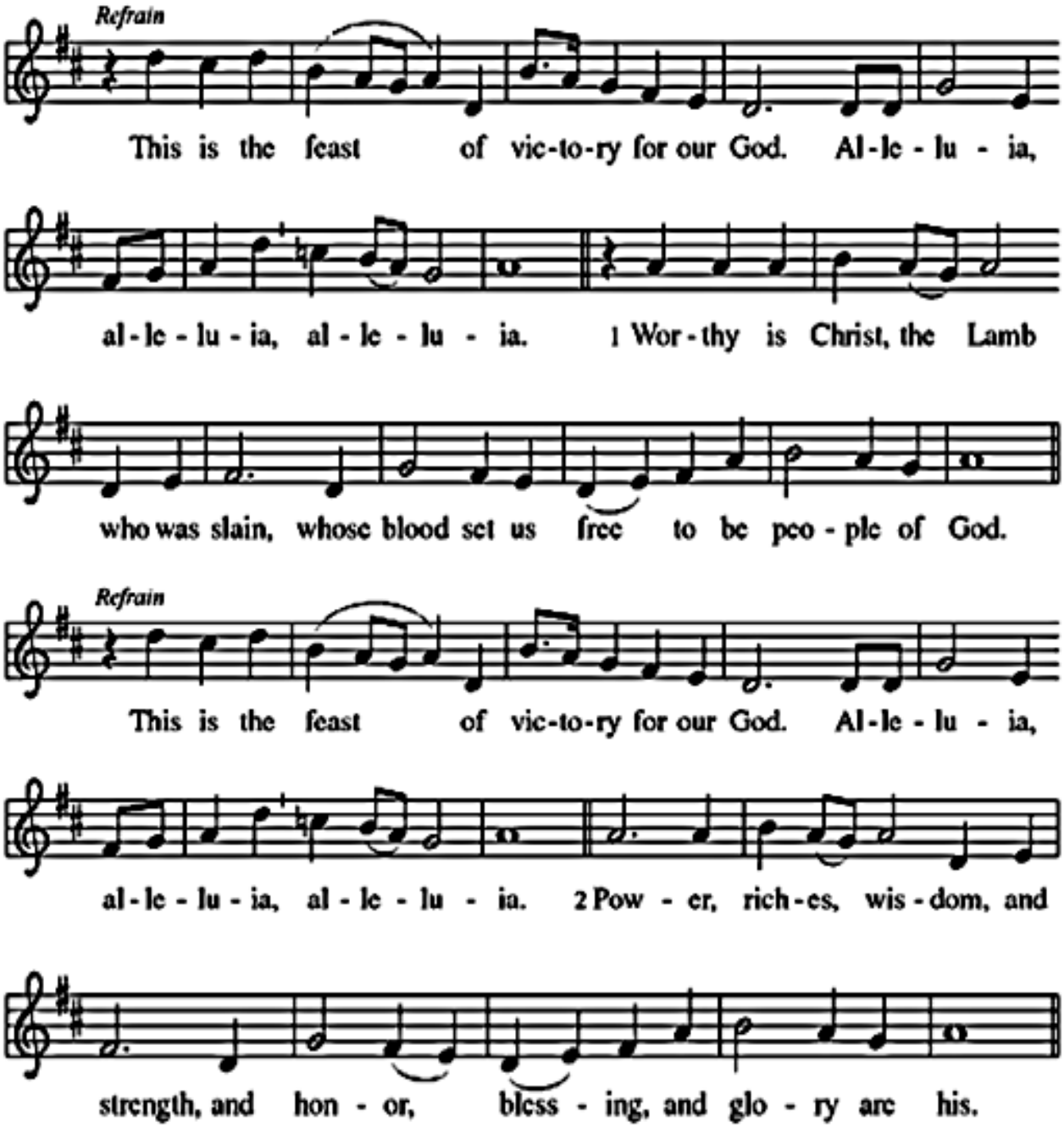


Text: Michael Perry, 1942–1996
Music: THAXTED, Gustav Holst, 1874–1934
Text © 1982, 1987 Jubilate Hymns, admin. Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
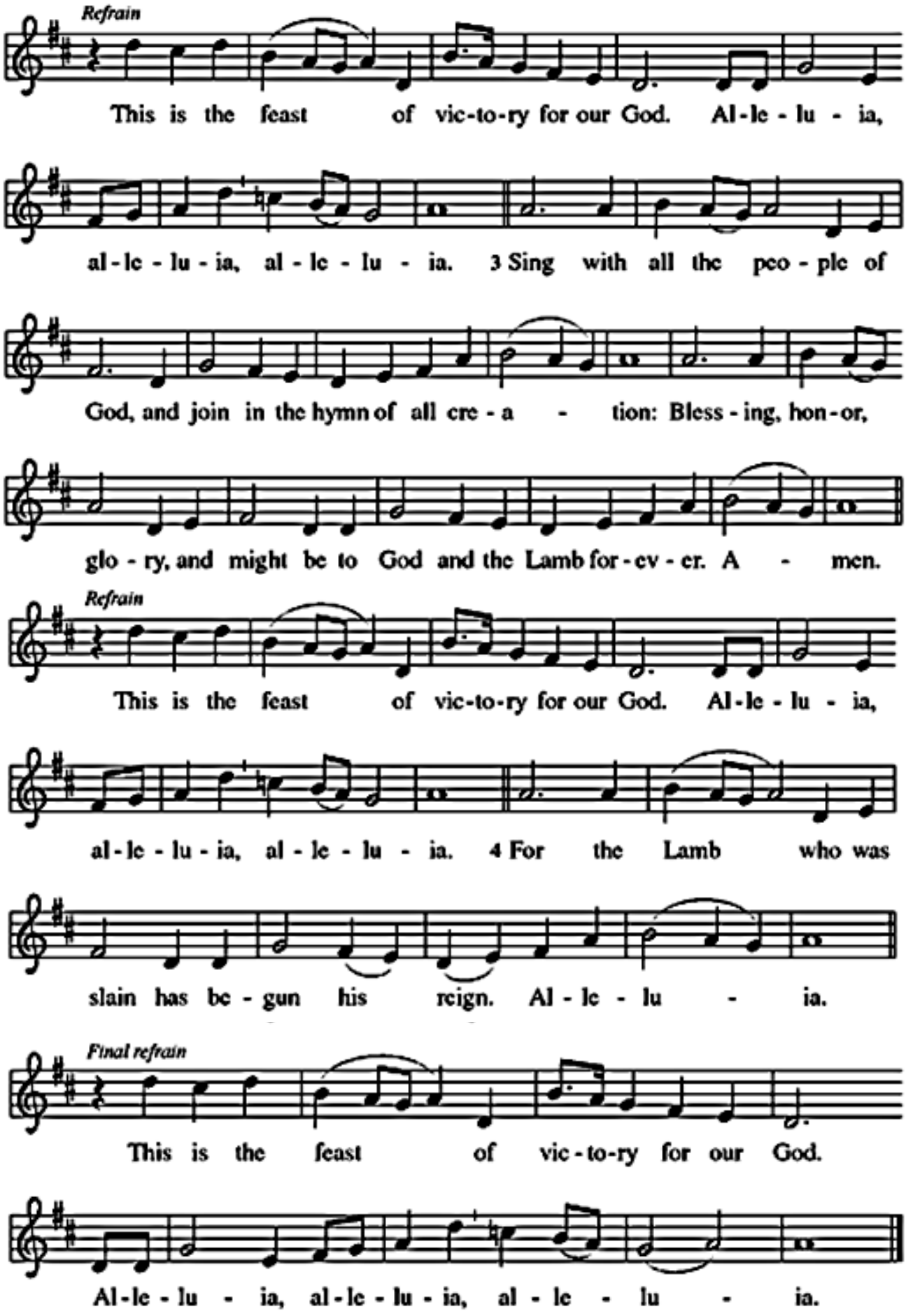
GREETING

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.

Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.



CHILDREN'S TIME

+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Isaiah 25:1-9

After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.

1 O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful
things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. 2 For you have made the city a heap, the fortified
city a ruin; the palace of foreigners is a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. 3 Therefore strong
peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. 4 For you have been a refuge to the
poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the
heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, 5 the noise of foreigners like heat
in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of
well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. 7 And he will
destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the covering that is spread over
all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all
faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.
9 It will be said on that day, "See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 23 *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader [1] The Lord | is my shepherd;
I shall not | be in want.

C [2] The Lord makes me lie down | in green pastures
and leads me be- | side still waters.

L [3] You restore my | soul, O Lord,
and guide me along right pathways | for your name's sake.

C [4] Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall | fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they | comfort me.

L [5] You prepare a table before me in the presence | of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.

C [6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the | Lord forever.

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

Amen.

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:1-9

Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.

1 My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
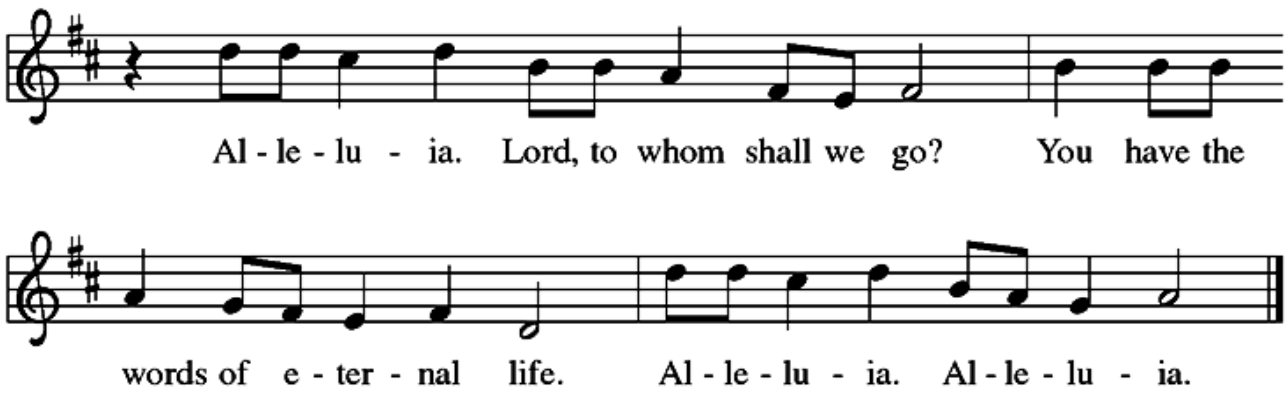
8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

R The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.

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

C Glory to you, O Lord.

1 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be
compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those
who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other
slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and
my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' 5 But
they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest
seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops,
destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is
ready, but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone
you find to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom
they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a
wedding robe, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?'
And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and
throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For
many are called, but few are chosen."

P The gospel of the Lord.

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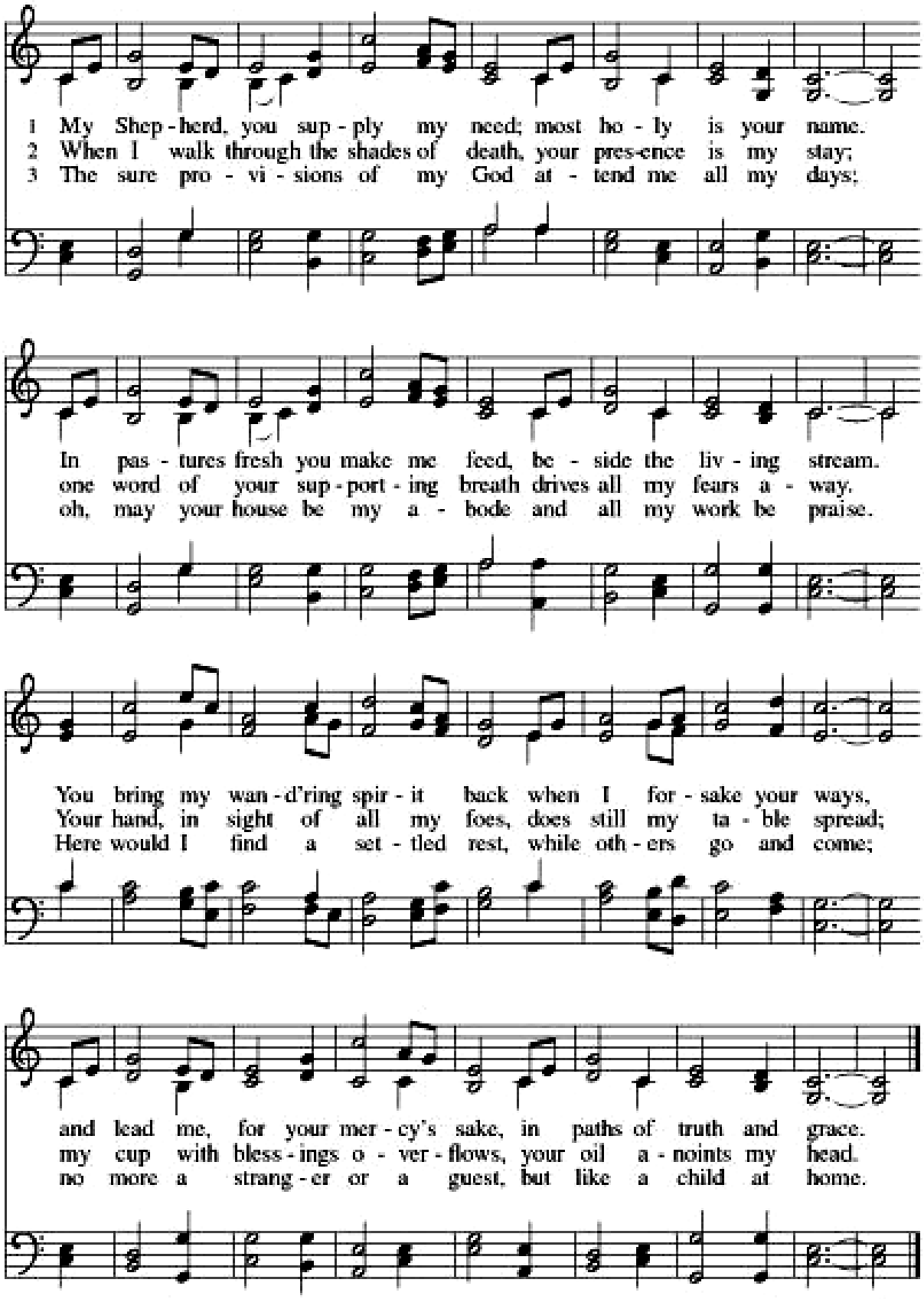
The assembly is seated.

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

Quiet reflection.

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW 782 *My Shepherd, You Supply My Need*



Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt., based on Psalm 23
Music: RESIGNATION, North American traditional

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)

Holy God, with your promise of unity in our minds, empower the World Council of Churches and all who work across religious differences to tell of God's undivided love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lead us to your quiet waters and green pastures. Preserve nature and restore humanity's relationship with the earth. Frustrate corporations that pollute water, so that they repent. We rejoice that, for the first time, fossil fuel cars fell below half of all cars sold worldwide. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We remember your promise to never abandon us amid storms and disasters. We pray for all in the path of hurricanes and natural disasters. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We remember your promise to wipe away every tear. Heal and console all who are sick, recovering from surgery, and 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 remember your promise of a banquet open to all people. Challenge this congregation to open wide its doors and property. We pray for the education and discipleship committee and all who dig deeply into the Word of God. 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 Stephanie Leitch and Astrid, Annelise Leysieffer, Martha Marky and for their extended families. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Remembering your promise to swallow up death forever. We give you thanks for those who have gone to your heavenly banquet before us. 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.



Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint

venmo

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

+ MEAL +

OFFERING

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

ANTHEM *"I Sill Sing, I Will Sing"*

I will sing, I will sing a song un-to the Lord.
I will sing, I will sing a song un-to the Lord.
I will sing, I will sing a song un-to the Lord.
Al-le-lu-ia. Glo-ry to the Lord.

(Refrain)
Al-le-lu, al-le-lu-ia, glo-ry to the Lord. Al-le-lu, al-le-lu-ia, glo-ry to the Lord.
Al-le-lu, al-le-lu-ia, glo-ry to the Lord. Al-le-lu-ia, glo-ry to the Lord.

We will come, we will come as one be-fore the Lord.
We will come, we will come as one be-fore the Lord.
We will come, we will come as one be-fore the Lord.
Al-le-lu-ia. Glo-ry to the Lord.

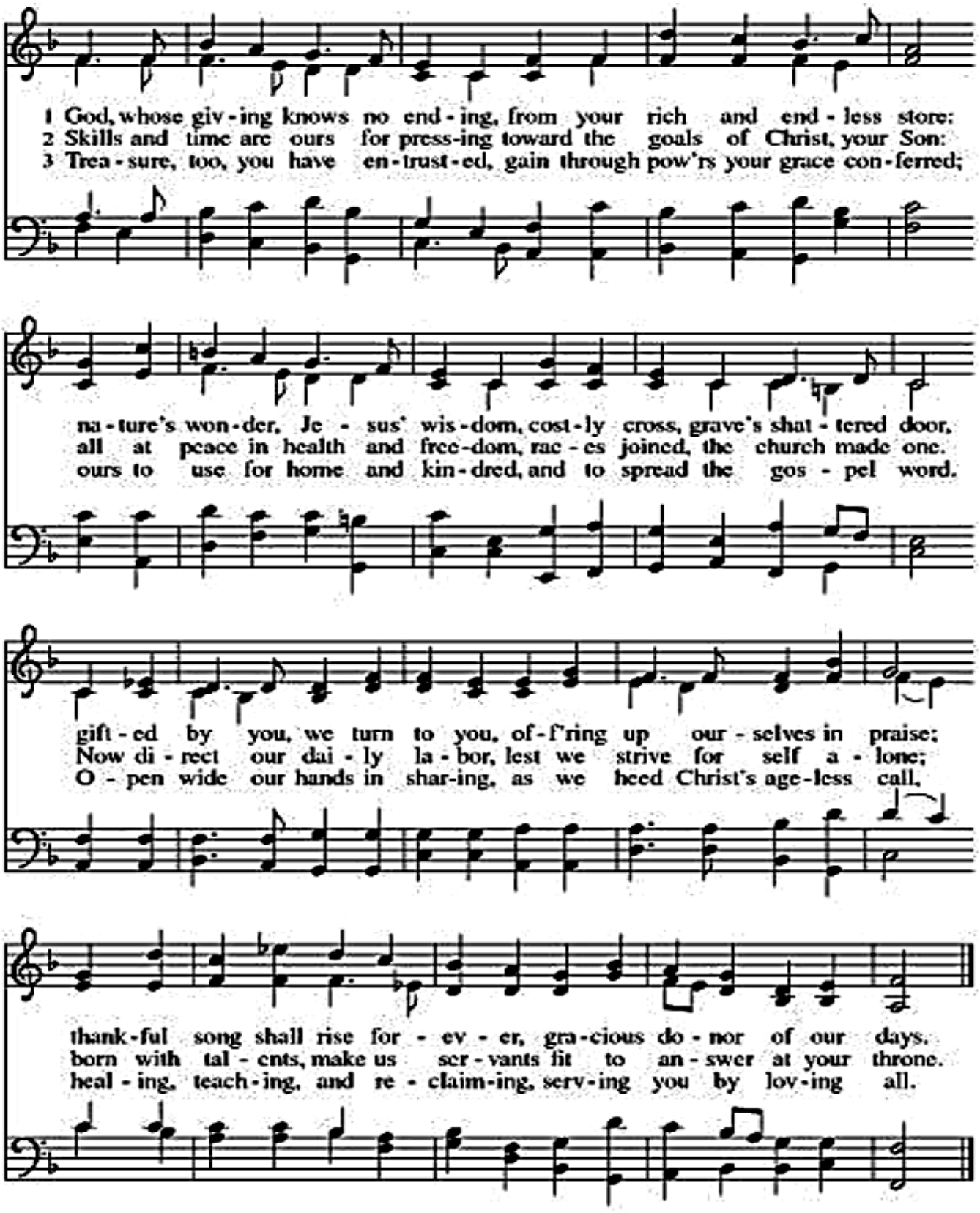
If the Son, if the Son shall make you free,
If the Son, if the Son shall make you free,
If the Son, if the Son shall make you free,
You shall be free in-deed.

Ev-'ry knee shall bow and ev-'ry tongue con-fess.
Ev-'ry knee shall bow and ev-'ry tongue con-fess.
Ev-'ry knee shall bow and ev-'ry tongue con-fess.
That Je-sus Christ is Lord.

In his Name, in his Name we have the vic-to-ry.
In his Name, in his Name we have the vic-to-ry.
In his Name, in his Name we have the vic-to-ry.
Al-le-lu-ia. Glo-ry to the Lord.

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.
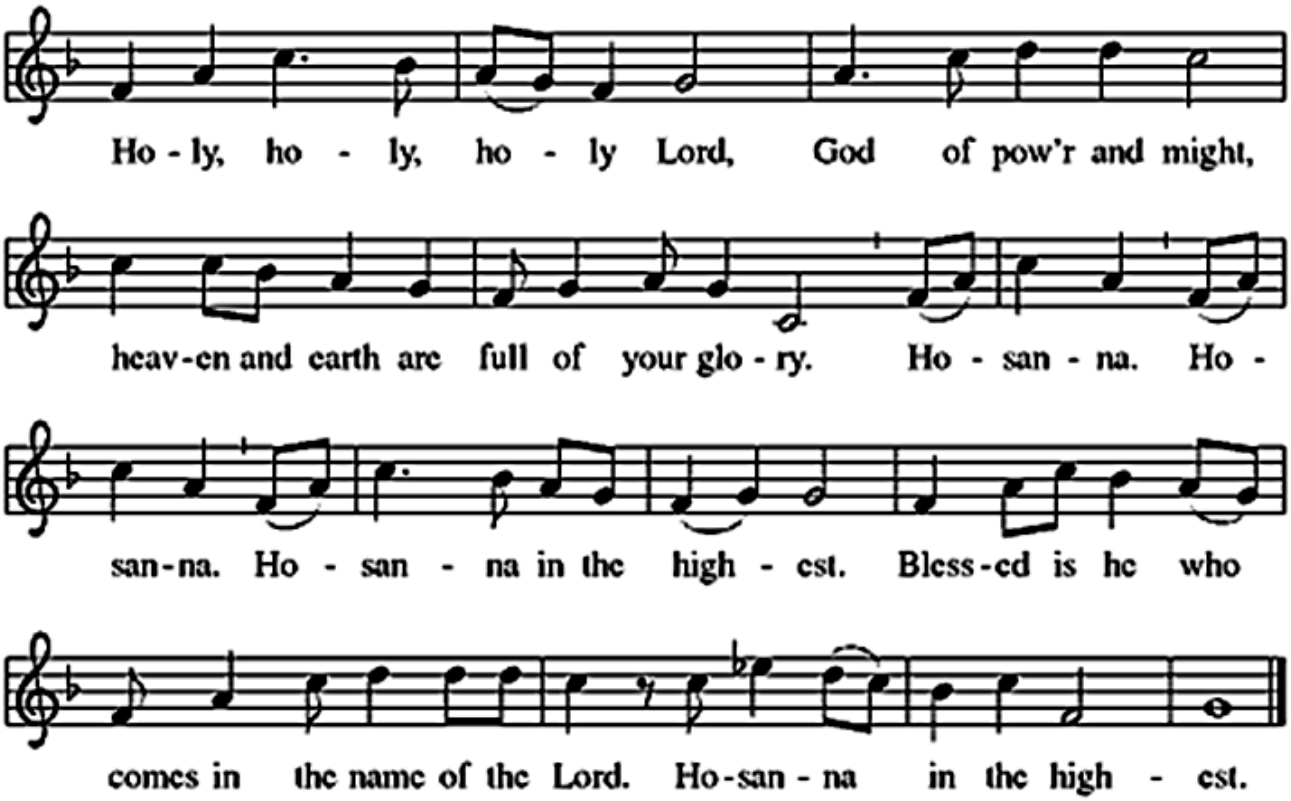
C We lift them to the Lord.

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.
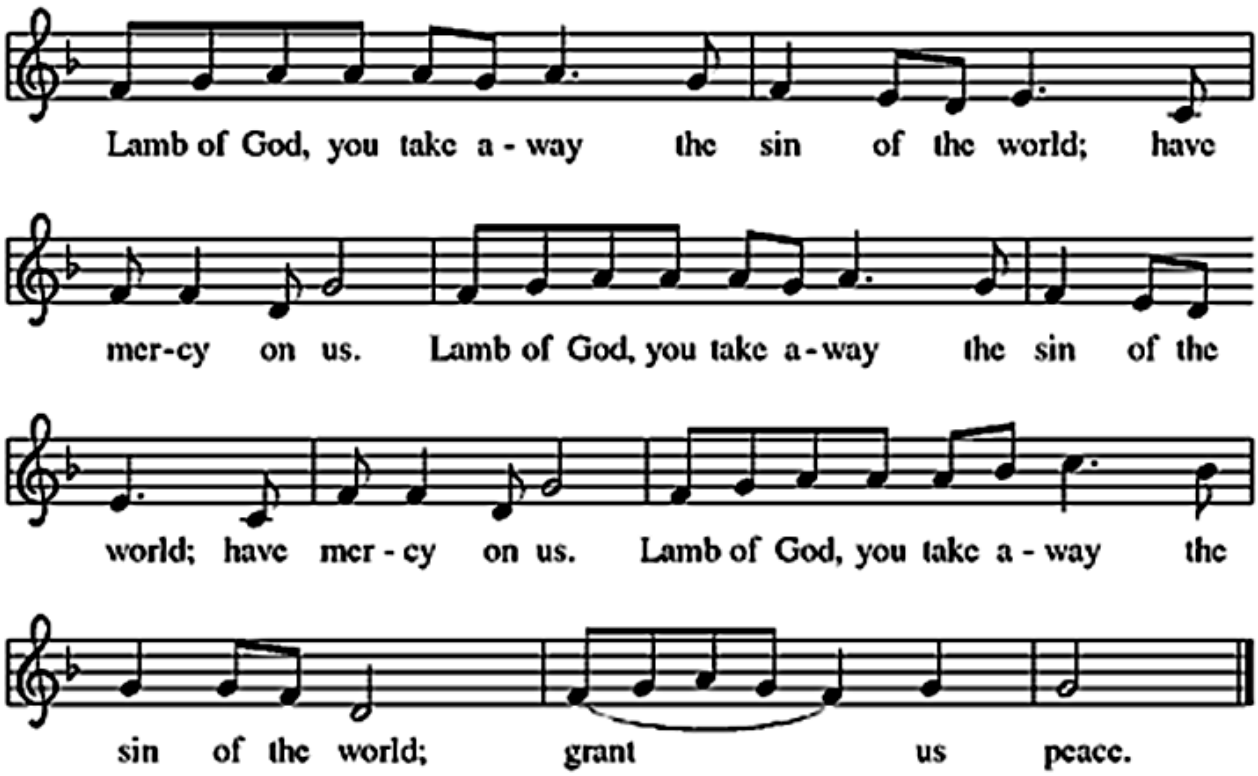
C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are 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 **ELW 468** *Around You, O Lord Jesus*

ELW 491 *Come, Let Us Eat*

The assembly stands.

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 547** *Sent Forth by God's Blessing* ⟹

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.
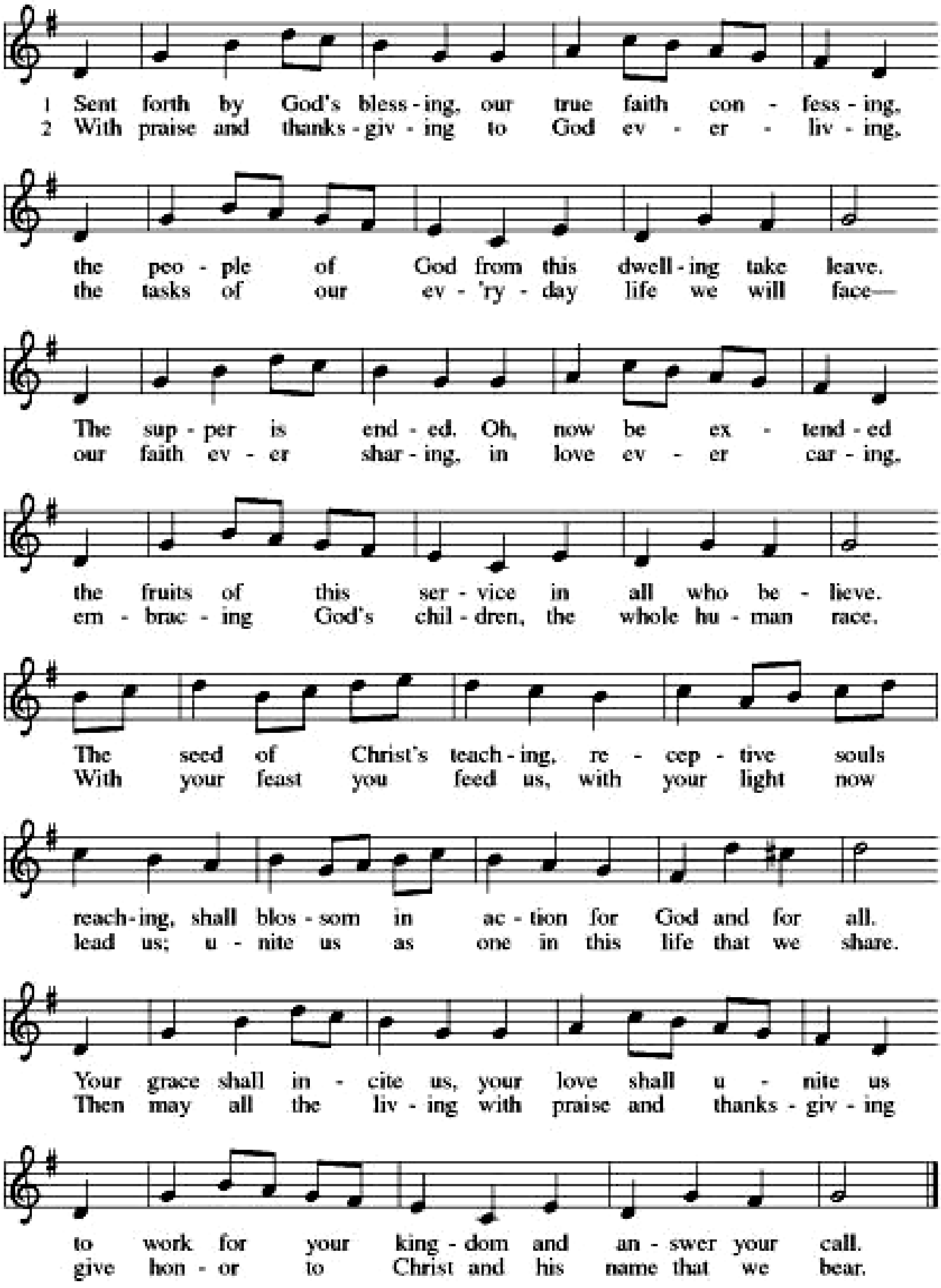
A Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C Thanks be to God!

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416
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SENDING HYMN ELW 547 *Sent Forth by God's Blessing*

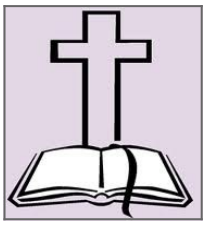


Text: Omer Westendorf, 1916–1997, alt.
Music: THE ASH GROVE, Welsh folk tune
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**When Jan Harrison dedicated today's altar flowers,
she wrote:
"In loving memory of my sweet son,
who would have been 63 today."**

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



Isaiah 45:1-7
Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]
1 Thessalonians 1:1-10
Matthew 22:15-22

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 11	October 18
Assisting Minister	Audrey Post	Jen Dritt
Cup Minister	Rita Ford	Beth Alexander
Cantor	Susan Hehn	Rudy Hehn
Lector	Judi Duffy	Jennifer Slusarz
Acolyte		
Tech Team	Mark Greeley Jacob Nallapu	Emery Oates Caroline Collins
Ushers	Patrick Kennell Jacob Nallapu	Ann DelRossi Jan Harrison
Altar Guild	Linda Eshleman Barbara Sullivan	Sandy Lamb-Daniels Lawana Lamb-Daniels
Counters	Kirsten Ebbesen Patricia Handschy	Loraine Sundberg Marilyn Larson

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 4 - October 11

Oct.	11	Sun.	9:00 am	Bible study
			9:30 am	Choir rehearsal
			10:00 am	Worship, Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
	14	Wed.	6:00 pm	Confirmation for adults
			7:00 pm	Choir rehearsal
	15	Thurs.	10:00 am	Bible study
Oct.	18	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



Our Guiding Principles

1. Jesus is Lord of our lives.

2. We welcome absolutely everyone.

3. We enjoy a celebratory relationship with God through worship.

4. We support and encourage community both in and beyond our congregation.

5. We are called to use our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure to serve all of God's people and seek justice for them.

6. Creativity and new ideas are a vital part of our life together as a congregation.