

# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Sunday, February 26, 2023

9:30 am

PRELUDE

**+ Gathering +**

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

RINGING OF THE BELL

*The congregation may stand at the sound of the bell.*

CONFESSION

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

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**Gracious God, Have mercy on us.**

**We confess that we have turned from you and from neighbors claimed and loved by you.**

**We have given ourselves to the powers of sin at work in division, bickering, bullying, isolation, hatred, fear, and oppression.**

**We have sinned against you and your people in judgmental thoughts, careless words, and fearful deeds; by what we have said and done, and by what we have left unsaid and undone.**

**We have left members of our human family isolated and alone.**

**We have not confronted hatred and violence.**

**We have left our own privilege, sexism, and heteronormativity unexamined.**

**We have failed to notice and challenge gender oppression, racism, ageism, classism, ableism, sizeism, binary thinking, and all the other ways we oppress.**

**We have turned away from hunger and poverty, turned our backs on the suffering of most of our world.**

**We have loved our own comfort more than we have loved others.**

**We have put the norms of our own sexual orientation, gender, race, and class before our love for you and our neighbors.**

**Turn us again toward you, bringing us into full relationship through your Spirit with all our siblings. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us to walk in the ways of the table-turner, the oppression-healer, and the community-builder. Let your Holy Spirit move in us and guide us into beloved community.**

Text by The Rev. Jay Wilson, adapted by The Rev. Allison Bengfort.

## WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

As a minister of Christ, I proclaim that God loves you and forgives all your sins. God created you, knows you intimately, and calls you “good.”

This absolution is for you and also for the sake of the world. We live as forgiven children of God within cycles of oppression. Our forgiveness creates the opportunity to renounce, resist, and undermine the unjust systems we live within.

Go forth as created, known, and loved people, forgiven and freed to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free.

**Amen.**

Text from Reconciling Works, adapted by The Rev. Allison Bengfort.

## GATHERING HYMN

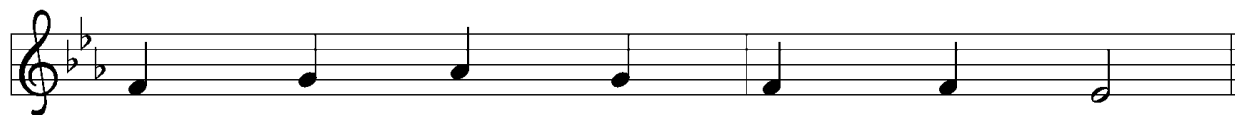
God, When Human Bonds Are Broken (ELW 603)



1 God, when hu - man bonds are bro - ken and we lack the  
2 Through that still - ness, with your Spir - it come in - to our  
3 You in us are bruised and bro - ken: hear us as we  
4 Send us, God of new be - gin - nings, hum - bly hope - ful  
5 Give us faith to be more faith - ful, give us hope to



love or skill to re - store the hope of heal - ing,  
world of stress, for the sake of Christ for - giv - ing  
seek re - lease from the pain of ear - lier liv - ing;  
in - to life. Use us as a means of bless - ing:  
be more true, give us love to go on learn - ing:



give us grace and make us still.  
all the fail - ures we con - fess.  
set us free and grant us peace.  
make us stron - ger, give us faith.  
God, en - cour - age and re - new!

Text: Fred Kaan, b. 1929

Music: MERTON, William H. Monk, 1823–1889

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## 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.**

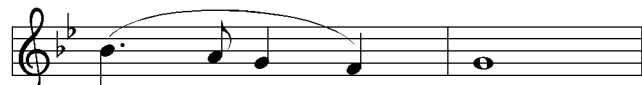
## KYRIE

ELW p. 193-194

*Cantor sings:* ...let us pray to the Lord.

*Congregation:*   
Lord, have mer - cy.

*Last time:* Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

*Congregation:*   
A - men.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray together.

**Forgiving God, as you encouraged your people to forgive, you modeled forgiveness by releasing us from our bondage to sin. Help us to forgive others, so that we might live in harmony with all your children. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

*The congregation may be seated.*

+ Word +

## REFLECTIVE SONG

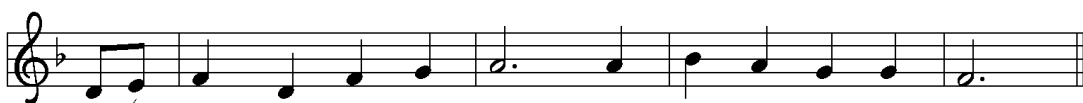
When Our Song Says Peace, verse 1



1 When our song says peace and the world says war, we will  
2 When our song says free and the world says bound, we will  
3 When our song says home and the world says lost, we will



sing de-spite the world. We will trust the song, for we sing of God,  
sing de-spite the world. We will trust the song, for we sing of God,  
sing de-spite the world. We will trust the song, for we sing of God,



who breaks the spear and sword and stills the storm of war.  
who o - pens pris - on doors and sets the cap - tives free.  
who brings us home at last, and gives a song to all.

## READING

Psalm 32

A reading from the Psalms.

- <sup>1</sup>Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,  
and whose sin is put away!
- <sup>2</sup>Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile!
- <sup>3</sup>While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,  
because of my groaning all day long.
- <sup>4</sup>For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.
- <sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."  
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- <sup>6</sup>Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble;  
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.
- <sup>7</sup>You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- <sup>8</sup>"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go;  
I will guide you with my eye.
- <sup>9</sup>Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding;  
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,  
or else they will not stay near you."
- <sup>10</sup>Great are the tribulations of the wicked;  
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.
- <sup>11</sup>Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD;  
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

## REFLECTIVE SONG

When Our Song Says Peace, verse 2 (see page 3)

## GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-35

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>15</sup> "If your sibling should commit some wrong against you, go and point out the error, but keep it between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won a loved one back; <sup>16</sup> if not, try again, but take one or two others with you, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If your sibling refuses to listen, refer the matter to the church. If they ignore even the church, then treat that sibling as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> The truth is, whatever you declare bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you declare loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup> "Again I tell you, if two of you on earth join in agreement to pray for anything whatsoever, it will be granted you by my God in heaven. <sup>20</sup> Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst."

<sup>21</sup> Peter came up and asked Jesus, “When a sibling wrongs me, how many times must I forgive? Seven times?” <sup>22</sup> “No,” Jesus replied, “not seven times; I tell you seventy times seven. <sup>23</sup> And here’s why.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a ruler who decided to settle accounts with the royal officials. <sup>24</sup> When the audit was begun, one was brought in who owed tens of millions of dollars. <sup>25</sup> As the debtor had no way of paying, the ruler ordered this official to be sold, along with family and property, in payment of the debt. <sup>26</sup> At this, the official bowed down in homage and said, ‘I beg you, your highness, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full!’ <sup>27</sup> Moved with pity, the ruler let the official go and wrote off the debt. <sup>28</sup> Then that same official went out and met a colleague who owed the official twenty dollars. The official seized and throttled this debtor with the demand, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ <sup>29</sup> The debtor dropped to the ground and began to plead, ‘Just give me time and I will pay you back in full!’ <sup>30</sup> But the official would hear none of it, and instead had the colleague put in debtor’s prison until the money was paid. <sup>31</sup> When the other officials saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and went to the ruler, reporting the entire incident. <sup>32</sup> The ruler sent for the official and said, ‘You worthless wretch! I cancelled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Should you not have dealt mercifully with your colleague, as I dealt with you?’ <sup>34</sup> Then in anger, the ruler handed the official over to be tortured until the debt had been paid in full. <sup>35</sup> My God in heaven will treat you exactly the same way unless you truly forgive your siblings from your hearts.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

REFLECTIVE SONG

When Our Song Says Peace, verse 3 (see page 3)

SERMON

Pastor Allison Bengfort



1 There's a wide-ness  
 2 There is wel-come  
 3 For the love of  
 4 'Tis not all we



in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness of the sea;  
 for the sin - ner, and a prom - ised grace made good;  
 God is broad - er than the mea - sures of our mind;  
 owe to Je - sus; it is some - thing more than all:



there's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice which is more than  
 there is mer - cy with the Sav - ior; there is heal - ing  
 and the heart of the E - ter - nal is most won - der -  
 great - er good be - cause of e - vil, larg - er mer - cy



lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's sor - rows  
 in his blood. There is grace e - nough for thou - sands  
 ful - ly kind. But we make this love too nar - row  
 through the fall. Make our love, O God, more faith - ful;



are more felt than up in heav'n. There is no place  
 of new worlds as great as this; there is room for  
 by false lim - its of our own; and we mag - ni -  
 let us take you at your word, and our lives will



where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment giv'n.  
 fresh cre - a - tions in that up - per home of bliss.  
 fy its strict - ness with a zeal God will not own.  
 be thanks-giv - ing for the good - ness of the Lord.

Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814–1863, alt.  
 Music: ST. HELENA, Calvin Hampton, 1938–1984  
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## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

I invite you to assume a posture of prayer. You may sit, stand, or kneel; fold your hands or turn your hands up toward the sky; close your eyes or lift your eyes upward.

You alone are God. Sustain your church in times of wilderness. Give vision and wisdom to bishops, their staff, and all entrusted with the ministry of administration. Counsel all who faithfully lead your people into the future. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You create verdant gardens and expansive deserts. Tend to the needs of every living creature. Bless those who work in fields and orchards, that the world is nourished by the fruits of their labor. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You know our temptations. Sustain those who govern and legislate. Instill in them a sense of your justice and righteousness, that equity and peace would pervade all the regions and nations of the world. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

You are a hiding place for all in distress. Draw near to exiles, and accompany all refugees and immigrants, especially children who travel alone. In times of trouble, trauma, or illness, surround your people with your steadfast love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You offer abundance to all. Bless the ministries of hospitality in this place. Care for those who tend to the needs of others, especially worship greeters, coffee hour hosts, and nursery. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

People of God, for what else shall we pray this day? Your prayers are invited now, either silently or aloud. (*Pause for prayers.*)

Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

or Lord, we praise you,  
**Thanks be to God.**

You alone are God. We praise you for the faithful departed in every age. Unite our prayers with theirs, until our wilderness journey is complete, and we rest in you. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

*You are invited to share a sign of peace with one another (wave, handshake, hug, etc.), honoring the personal boundaries of all. Those online may unmute and verbally share the peace.*

## + Meal +

### INVITATION TO OFFERING

Our ancestors in faith gathered together long ago to remember, to be restored, to be renewed. They shared their story, prayed together, and made an offering to God as they prepared to set out on the long journey to freedom in the Promised Land. Today we gather to remember and to pray together, to be restored and renewed, and we bring our own offerings so the ministry of this church will continue to participate in the saving works of God. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.

### OFFERTORY

*We give thanks for your ongoing support of the ministry of St. John's! Gifts may be placed in the offering plate, made in the Vanco Mobile app, or given online by scanning the QR code. Thank you for your generosity!*



### OFFERTORY SOLO

“Weary Traveler,” arr. by Florence Price

### OFFERTORY VERSE

When Jesus Set His Table



When Je - sus set His ta - ble, no one was turned a - way. That ta - ble was a  
No race, no creed, no na - tion, no love of heart and vow, No gen - der is re -  
pro - mise of bles - sing and of grace. So set the ta - ble ful - ly in - vite the whole world in. If  
ject - ed. The ta - ble's wait - ing now.

13  
we would share love's wel - come then here's where we be - gin!

Music and text: Amanda Udis-Kessler

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray together.

**God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life. Amen.**



## DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

## PREFACE

### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and

might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -

san - na in the high-est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

### LORD'S PRAYER

**God our Mother, God our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

### INVITATION

### COMMUNION

*All are welcome to commune at Christ's table without exception! If you are online, serve yourself or those worshipping with you by saying, "The body of Christ, given for you," and, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." If you are communing in person, please proceed down the center aisle at the direction of an usher. You may receive bread or request a gluten-free wafer. A glass of wine (dark colored) will be placed on the table for you, or you may request grape juice (light colored). After drinking, please place your empty glass in the basket before returning to your seat via the side aisle. If you would prefer to receive only a blessing, you may cross your arms across your chest to indicate this preference. If you would like to receive communion in your seat, please inform an usher, and the sacrament will be brought to you.*

### COMMUNION VERSE

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your  
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -  
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,  
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray together.

**Holy One-in-Three, through your death,  
we are fed with the bread of life.**

**Let us follow your way to the cross,  
to be for others a sign of your compassion and life.**

**As you have fed us, let us go out to be part of feeding the world.**

**Amen.**

## + Sending +

## BENEDICTION

Creator, source of love,  
Christ, the resurrection and the life,  
Holy Spirit, midwife of rebirth,  
✠ bless you in this Lenten journey.

**Amen.**

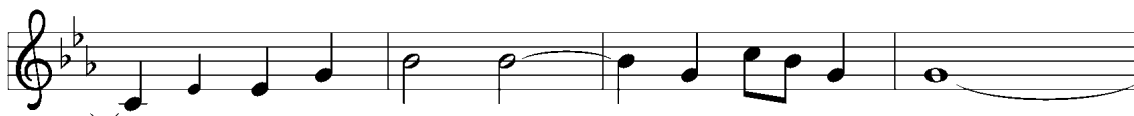
## SENDING HYMN

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

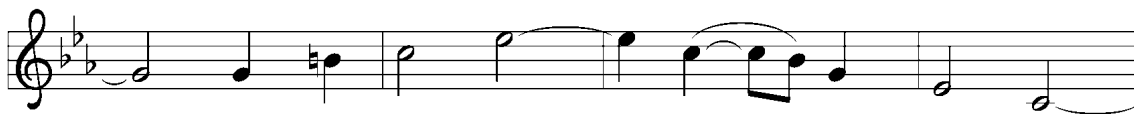
ELW 325



1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;  
3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;  
when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,  
when my heart is al - most break - ing,  
when my head is bowed in sor - row,



Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Jesus meets you on the way.

**Thanks be to God!**

## SERVING TODAY

<i>Preaching &amp; Presiding Minister:</i>	The Rev. Allison Bengfort
<i>Assisting Minister:</i>	Cindi Rachowicz
<i>Guest Organist:</i>	Sam Reese
<i>Cantor:</i>	Audrey Neace
<i>Usher:</i>	Buckley Crist
<i>Children's Church:</i>	Luke & Erin Rasmussen, Courtney Radde
<i>Altar Guild:</i>	Susan Crist
<i>Coffee Hour Hosts:</i>	The Danielsen Family

Worship elements are drawn from:

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- Scripture readings from The Inclusive Bible and the NRSV.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Wednesday Dinner Church during Lent**

On each of the five Wednesdays in March, we will gather at 6 pm in the Fellowship Hall for Dinner Church. The service will begin with portions of Holden Evening Prayer accompanied by piano and violin and including song, prayer, and scripture. We will continue the service with a soup supper and conversation about topics from the book, *Queer Virtue: What LGBTQ People Know about Life and Love and How it Can Revitalize Christianity*, by The Rev. Elizabeth Edman. We will watch a 2-minute video of the author sharing about the day's theme and look at a brief excerpt from the book to spark conversation. Reading the book is not required or expected, but certainly welcome! Books are now available to be picked up at worship or in the church office during the week. A \$10 donation to offset the cost of the book is suggested, but not required. If you'd like to read along with the theme for each week, follow the schedule below:

- March 1: Identity & Pride – Chapters 2 & 7
- March 8: Risk & Coming Out – Chapters 3 & 8
- March 15: Touch – Chapter 4
- March 22: Adoption & Authenticity – Chapters 6 & 9
- March 29: Scandal & Hospitality – Chapters 5 & 10

### **Wilmette Worker Rights Educational Event**

Today, Sunday, February 26, 3:00-4:00 pm, St. John's Wilmette Arise Chicago, a multi-faith workers rights organization, is partnering with religious leaders and Wilmette community leaders to promote the Cook County workers' rights laws. Come learn more about these laws and how we can promote fairness for all Wilmette workers! Questions? Contact Luke Sullivan at [luke@arisechicago.org](mailto:luke@arisechicago.org) or 872-223-2415.

### **From Welcoming to Inclusive: What it Means to be Fully Affirming**

What does it really mean to be an LGBTQIA-affirming church? As part of our RIC process, we are working on moving from an attitude of "queer people are allowed to be here" to an attitude of "we built this with our queer siblings in mind." Next Sunday from 10:45-11:45 am, we welcome The Rev. Elle Dowd to lead us in a presentation on the markers of a church that is truly queer-affirming. Pastor Elle is a bi-furious ELCA pastor, PhD student at Chicago Theological Seminary, campus minister of South Loop Campus Ministry, and author of *Baptized in Teargas*. She will share about her own experiences as a queer person in the church and help us reflect on how the culture of St. John's can continue to evolve to embody our love for all God's children. Pastor Elle will also guest preach in worship that Sunday.

### **Our RIC Journey: Resources Available, Questions & Comments Invited**

This winter and spring, our congregation is doing the internal reflection and learning necessary to become not just welcoming, but fully affirming of the LGBTQIA+ community. This is called the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) process, which our RIC Team (Chris Maglocchi, Chad Johnson, Molly Bolash, and Luke Rasmussen) hopes will culminate in an affirmative vote at our June congregational meeting to become an RIC church. Free resources on Biblical interpretation, supporting LGBTQIA+ youth, and queer terminology can be found on the table in the gathering area. The team would love to talk with you about your questions, comments, or concerns, so please reach out to have a conversation. You may also place anonymous questions in the basket in the gathering area.