

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



First Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! We continue to do our best in providing the safest environment possible for you to worship our Lord with your whole heart, even during these COVID-19 times. Here are the precautions we are taking on behalf of our whole community of faith, so that we best care for one another and those we are around during the week.

- We ask you wear a mask the entire time you are in the building, unless you have a medical condition preventing you from doing so.
- Bulletins and individual Communion elements are available for you to pick up as you enter from the back of the sanctuary. The Communion elements are available in wine and grape juice form as well as wheat and gluten-free wafers. We will partake of the body and blood of Christ together from our respective seats.
- There will not be a separate time for an offering to be collected for supporting our congregational and wider-church ministry, and so an offering basket is placed beside the bulletins and Communion elements, for those who wish to give this day.
- We are asking you to refrain from singing, as we do our best to minimize the spread of droplets and aerosols around our masks. You may do so in your heart, where we believe God hears just as well as if spoken or sung aloud. We, also, ask that you continue participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print, but doing so in a whisper voice.
- There will not be a time for sharing of the peace, but we encourage you to do so with one another before or after the worship (while maintaining the physical distancing recommendations of six feet).
- There will not be a processional or recessional of the cross, nor will there be a receiving line with the pastor after the worship. If you wish to speak for Pastor Brad, for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact him through email, text or calling him directly.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we will always err on the side of caution while knowing that we can still transmit the virus even with the full vaccination.

First Sunday in Lent

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

Prelude *Prelude on Llanfyllin* (HELD)

*Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water,
pour out your mercy over us.
Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.
Rebuild what we have ruined
and mend what we have torn.
Wash us in your cleansing flood.
Make us alive in the Spirit
to follow in the way of Jesus,
as healers and restorers of the world you so love.

Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails.
The promise rests on grace:
by the saving love of Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God,
your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them no more.
Journey in the way of Jesus.
Amen.

Gathering Hymn *Eternal Lord of Love, Behold Your Church*

#321

Text: Thomas H. Cain, 1931-2003

- 1 Eternal Lord of love, behold your church
walking once more the pilgrim way of Lent,
led by your cloud by day, by night your fire,
moved by your love and toward your presence bent:
far off yet here—the goal of all desire.
- 2 So daily dying to the way of self,
so daily living to your way of love,
we walk the road, Lord Jesus, that you trod,
knowing ourselves baptized into your death:
so we are dead and live with you in God.
- 3 If dead in you, so in you we arise,
you the firstborn of all the faithful dead;
and as through stony ground the green shoots break,
glorious in springtime dress of leaf and flow'r,
so into life and glory shall we wake.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may remember your love brought to life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.

⁸God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 25:1-10

¹To you, O LORD,
I lift up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.**

⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶**Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness,
O LORD.

⁸**You are gracious and upright, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

¹⁰**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**

Second Lesson

1 Peter 3:18-22

As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.

¹⁸Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

*Gospel

Mark 1:9-15

The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God's reign.

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Just As I Am, without One Plea*

#592

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871

- 1 Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
- 2 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
- 3 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come,
- 4 Just as I am; thy love unknown
has broken ev'ry barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

*Prayers of Intercession

On this first Sunday in Lent, let us pray boldly for all in need, responding to each petition with words echoing today's psalm, "in you we put our trust."

A brief silence.

Relying on you, O God of our salvation, strengthen your whole church throughout the world: that strengthened by the promises of baptism, we may discern your way of truth and justice, and reject the attractive lures of evil. Sustain all your precious children who are beset with temptations or hardship. O righteous God: **in you we put our trust.**

Grateful for a plenteous creation, preserve the wild beasts and keep lands from being flooded by waters. Encourage the work of biologists, conservationists, and science educators, that we all come to appreciate more about the wonders that you create. O creative God: **in you we put our trust.**

Distressed by injustice and violence, instill wisdom for leaders who govern in our nation and around the world, that they strive for equality and concord in all things. Visit the people of Myanmar and Sudan and stem the might of hate around the world you still so love. O sovereign God: **in you we put our trust.**

Alert to the difficulties of wintertime, watch over all who are cold, for all the homeless, for refugees awaiting assistance, and for all whose employment requires them to endure brutal weather. Surround them with a community of concern. O warm-hearted God: **in you we put our trust.**

Pained by the suffering of others, continue to provide care for those who have contracted COVID-19, for those bowed down by trials of any kind, for those who face natural disasters, for those whose suffering is known only to you. Comfort those who feel desolate. Give health and wholeness to all who suffer. O benevolent God: **in you we put our trust.**

We praise you for the saints of time past. Give us the faith that at the end, your rainbow will bring endless beauty to all things. O splendid God: **in you we put our trust.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy God,
our living Water and our merciful Guide,
together with rivers and seas, wells and springs
we bless and magnify you.

You led your people Israel through the desert,
and provided them water from the rock.
We praise you for Christ, our Rock and our Water,
who joined us in our desert,
pouring out his life for the world.

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.

Remembering, therefore,
his life, death, and resurrection,
we await your salvation for all this thirsty world.

Holy Spirit, bless this holy food
and on all the baptized gathered for this feast:
wash away our sin,
that we may be revived for our journey by the love of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever.

Amen.

**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.**

Communion

Music Interlude *Sonata in E-flat, Siciliano* (BACH)

Ann Droste, Flute

You may use this time to offer your own personal prayers to God.

Prayer after Communion

God of steadfast love,
from this table you gather your people
into one body for the sake of the world.
Send us in the power of the Holy Spirit,
that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Blessing

You are what God made you to be:
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
shaped as holy and beloved,
freed to serve your neighbor.
God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. **Amen.**

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993

- 1 Bless now, O God, the journey
that all your people make,
the path through noise and silence,
the way of give and take.
The trail is found in desert
and winds the mountain round,
then leads beside still waters,
the road where faith is found.

- 2 Bless sojourners and pilgrims
who share this winding way;
your hope burns through the terrors,
your love sustains the day.
We yearn for holy freedom
while often we are bound;
together we are seeking
the road where faith is found.

- 3 Divine eternal lover,
you meet us on the road.
We wait for land of promise
where milk and honey flow,
but waiting not for places,
you meet us all around.
Our covenant is written
on roads, as faith is found.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news!
Thanks be to God.

Postlude *We're Marching to Zion* (SHACKLEY)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Steve Dobush, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family The Susanek family at the death of Tim Susanek & The Hoben family at the death of Penny.

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 2/14/2021: \$2327

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Don Schirmer, memorials were given by Carol Quinones, Judy Difulvio, and Peggy Smith.

Lectinary Blog: Divine Emotions



Image: iStock.com/suriya silsakson

I usually think of the Bible as a recording of God's interactions with God's people from several inspired human perspectives. But every so often in Scripture we are presented with descriptions of God's interior life, emotions, thoughts and even surprise. Both passages this week include God setting up a sign in the sky to communicate an emotion-laden message to Jesus and to Godself.

The Genesis passage describes God's covenant with Noah, his family and all animal life on earth. God promised to never again wipe out all life by a flood and set a bow in the sky as a reminder of this covenant. The rainbow, contrary to my son's children's Bible, isn't a sign primarily for the people, but for God. In Genesis 9:14-16, God specifically said the sign was to be a reminder to God not to violate what was promised to all animal and human life. God was the cause *and recipient* of the rainbow promise.

This is one of those passages that speaks about God's internal process. The text could very easily have said what our children's picture Bible says: the rainbow was a sign for Noah that God wouldn't send a world flood again. But God set up a reminder for Godself. Noah was told: "When the bow is in the clouds, *I will see* it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Genesis 9:16).

God has a complex emotional life and is filled, moved and, according to several prophets, overwhelmed by divine emotion:

*For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the Lord, your Redeemer (Isaiah 54:7-8).*

A cursory review of Scripture reveals many times when God was provoked to wrath. God knows this about Godself. So the Lord set a sign in the sky to remind God of God's promises, lest regret at making humans would overwhelm God's love for the children (again). Many theologians, preferring a Platonic non-moved God, have tried to smooth over these emotional descriptions of God. But we do ourselves and Scripture a disservice if we ignore God's rich emotional life portrayed on virtually every page of Scripture. Thank heavens (literally) for the prophets and mystics who have reminded us time and again of God's emotional life.

As Jesus was coming up out of the Jordan River after being baptized by his relative John, he saw heaven split open and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. He heard a voice saying: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:10-11). In this telling, the voice was only for Jesus. We are still early in the Gospel of Mark, and the messianic secret must still be kept. A public vision of heaven opening and the Spirit descending upon a man would have done wonders for winning Jesus acclaim and followers, but that wasn't the goal yet.

The goal of the heavenly vision and voice seems to have been an encouragement to Jesus. Immediately (as is usually the case in Mark's rushed narrative) after his baptism, he was driven out to the wilderness to be tempted. The temptation didn't begin immediately, but only after surviving 40 days in the wilderness, which was a challenge enough on its own. Jesus was in store for a tough time, but he had God's words ringing in his ears: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." God was concerned with Jesus' emotional experience and wanted to make sure that, during the difficult period of temptation and near-starvation, Jesus knew that God loved him. This sign wasn't primarily for the people, but to speak emotional encouragement for the difficult times ahead—such as from a parent reminding a child that she is beloved.

Friends, if God intentionally sets up reminders and signs to prevent Godself and Jesus from being overwhelmed with negative emotions, certainly we humans who are the image-bearers of God also ought to think about memorializing our identity as beloved children of God before difficult times come. Times have been tough recently. We will be overwhelmed with anger, fear and doubt—that is normal. Even God's emotional life is a roller coaster! What signs can we set up for ourselves and how can we listen for the divine voice *before* we struggle so that, in the midst of difficulties, we do not falter?

I suggest daily looking to the cross, the eucharist, our baptismal waters and Scripture. Let us think about fulfilling Jesus' commandment to be mature like our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:48) and remind ourselves of God's presence and grace as we endure the ups and downs that will surely come.

This, and other resources for the journey of faith, available at LivingLutheran.org.



Cory Driver is a minister of word and service, and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. He earned his doctorate in Jewish religious cultures from Emory University, Atlanta. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.



We invite you to continue joining us through virtual means as we worship with our siblings in Christ of the Lutheran Church of the Master for our midweek Lenten gatherings. For the following midweek Wednesday worships, we will provide two videos: one that will include prayer, a reading from Scripture, and a brief homily. The other will be Holden Evening Prayer, as we have sung together in recent years. We will provide a PDF of Holden Evening Prayer that you may use to sing along from home, or you may pick up a paper copy in the sanctuary.

We know this is not ideal, as we often look forward to precious time together with our siblings in Christ at Church of the Master, but we also know we should continue to do our best in minimizing larger gatherings for the sake of everyone involved. We still look forward to this opportunity for us to take on this Lenten journey together, regardless of the circumstances.

Carrying the Message

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15 (NIV)

Based on Mark 1:9-15



S J P Y B A P T I Z E D P S S
D M U I D L Q E Z S G T N U C
J V Q Z L L V N R R N E I P E
N E A R D O K N R E P T G M D
W K D S D A E Z P O S G O E Z
T I U U P V Y E Y P E C T Z F
I N Y E A I R S X V L P U C O
M G Y E D N R A E J M N Q Y R
E D H S G D J I J E W F B P T
D O Q T O T L Y T P D A X L Y
R M Z O D E S G Q I E C T Q H
M M G Z B V O I C E S U J E S
V J O R D A N K Q Y E D M W R
M K Z L H G Z I K R R N E P D
E B U H Q H R G E S T N K D S

REPENT
DESERT
FORTY
GOOD

TEMPTED
COME
NEWS
SPIRIT

TIME
VOICE
OPEN
DOVE

BAPTIZED
KINGDOM
WATER
HEAVEN

BELIEVE
JORDAN
DAYS
NEAR