

Lent 2
Conversations we fear:
Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night

Sunday, March 1, 2026
Second Sunday in Lent



48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org

PRELUDE

Jesus, Lead Thou On
(Jesus, Still Lead On, [ELW 624])

Paul Manz
tune, Adam Drese

ANNOUNCEMENTS

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,
we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery

ELW 334

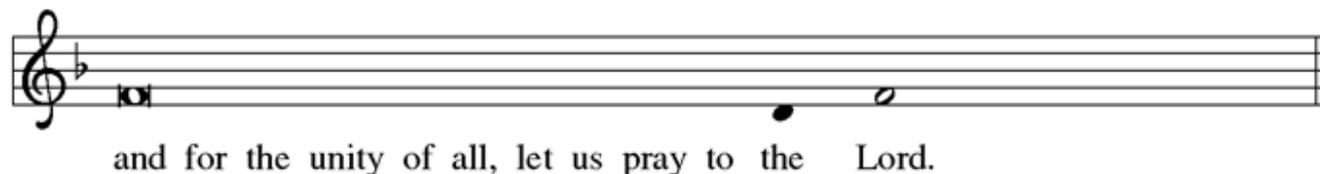
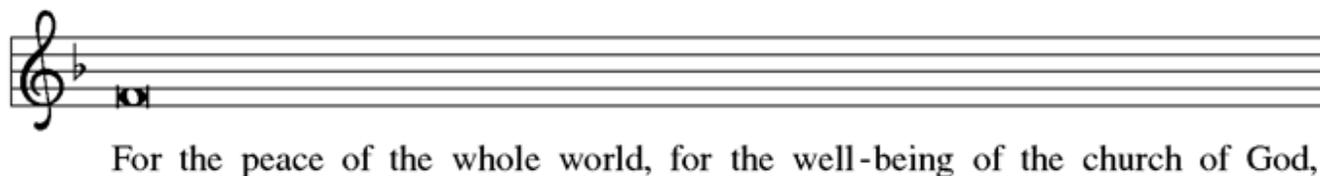
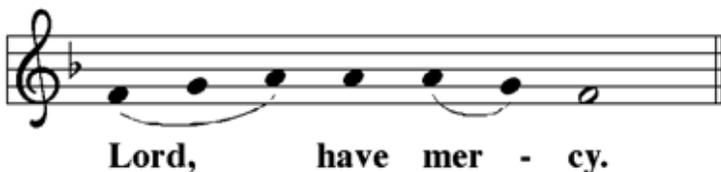
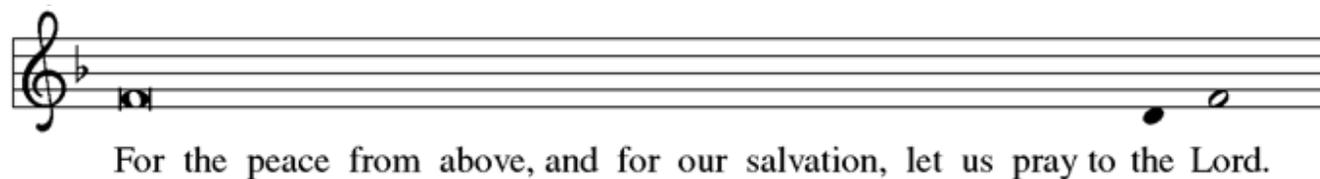
stanzas 1-3 & Lent 2

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

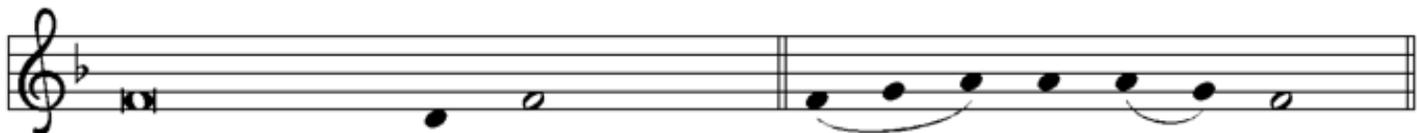




Lord, have mer - cy.

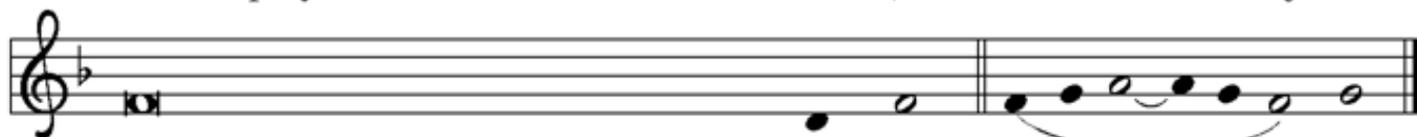


For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS AND JOY!

*All kids ages 3 through elementary are welcome to a special time of hearing the Word, conversation and activity! Parents can remain in the sanctuary while the kids gather in designated spaces. **Worship for Kids** (Ages 3 – Grade 2) meets across the hall from the sanctuary and **JOY!** (Grades 3 – 5) meets downstairs. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.*

Psalm 121

This Lent, we join with our ancestors in faith in praying and singing the Psalms in worship. While written for a specific time and particular situations, the Psalms remain a powerful source of language that expresses the depth of human emotion and experience. The congregation sings the refrain at the direction of the cantor.

Refrain



Verses:

1. I lift up my eyes toward the mountains; when shall my help come to me? My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. **Refrain**
2. May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you: indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel. **Refrain**
3. The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your shade; he is beside you at your right hand. The sun shall not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. (*cont. to v. 4*)

The Lord will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The Lord will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever. **Refrain**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION





The holy gospel according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: John 3:1-17

Narrator: There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. He came to Jesus at night and said:

Nicodemus: Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus: I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it's not possible to see God's kingdom.

Nicodemus: How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?

Jesus: I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Don't be surprised that I said to you, *You must be born anew*. God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus: How are these things possible?

Jesus:

"You are a teacher of Israel, and you don't know these things? I assure you that we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you don't receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

Narrator: And so, under the quiet of night, a teacher met the Light. Understanding began — not with certainty, but with wonder.

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

SERMON

We take a moment to reflect on God's word before singing the hymn of the day.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Ask the Complicated Questions

ACS 1005

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

#1 Faithful One, you renew us by grace. As you have inspired faith through the work of church artists and hymnwriters throughout the ages, give your church the means to praise your beauty today. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

#2 Living One, you delight in this world. The sun and moon, the wind and the water declare your goodness. Preserve this earth, and protect conservationists, scientists, and all who labor in service to creation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

#3 Ruling One, you bless us to be a blessing. Open the hearts of all leaders to seek the flourishing of every person and lend your help to all who wait for justice, deliverance, and peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We pray for those who will gather this week as part of the ELCA Conference of Bishops meeting, giving thanks for their faith, gifts, wisdom and careful deliberation, which God uses to benefit and guide the church and its leaders; and for our siblings in faith in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. May our partnerships remind us of your abundance. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We know that all people matter in your eyes and you know their cares and concerns, their hopes and joys. We pray for those whose needs are known to us.

We pray for those who are grieving, especially the family and friends of:

- Josiah L, friend of the Koncilja family, who died 2/23
- Paul N, who died 2/22, we especially remember wife, Gwen, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren
- Marie, Bob & Becki P's daughter's mother-in-law

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Denise H, daughter-in-law of Kathy F, who has been sick with pneumonia
- Jan S, recovering from knee replacement surgery
- Kaitlin M., granddaughter of a friend of the GerryAnn and Wayne W., being treated for leukemia
- Bob P., as he prepares for surgery on 3/5

Hear the names of those we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

Silence for individual prayer.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor. If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Thank you for your offerings that support the ongoing ministry that we share.

Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry or scan the QR (quick response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile giving page.



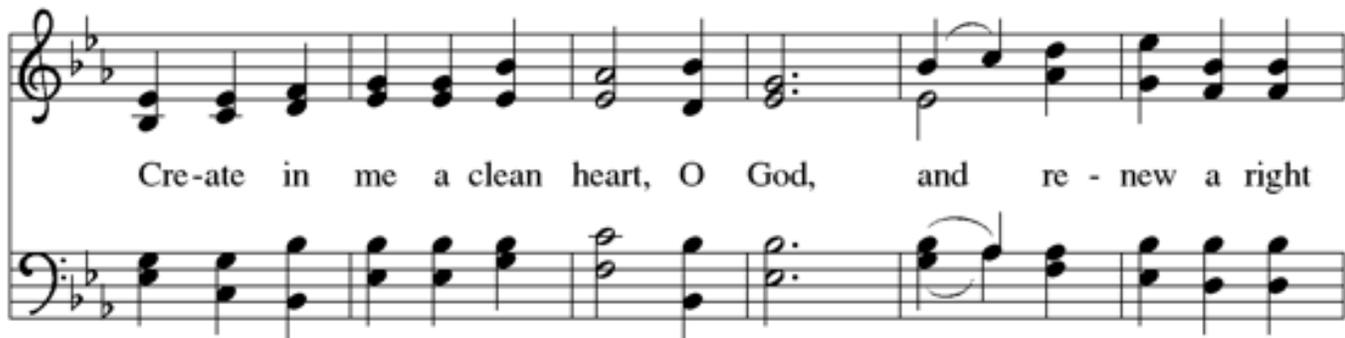
OFFERING OF MUSIC

If You Search with All Your Heart

words, Jeremiah 29:11-14, adapt.
music, Craig Courtney

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right



The image shows a musical score for an offertory prayer. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The lyrics are: "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." The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block chords and moving bass lines.

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.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. God our provider,
you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

United in baptism, we pray as Jesus taught:

**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

Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.

THE COMMUNION

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

Communion is served at the rail. The ushers will direct you forward by the center aisle. You may kneel or stand, remaining at the rail as long as you desire and return to your seat by the outer aisle. Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.

HYMN FOR COMMUNION

Return to God

ACS 921

The congregation repeats after the cantor on each phrase, then proceeds to sing the refrain

Refrain: return, return to God

Leader

1 In all af - flic - tion
2 With great en - dur - ance
3 In ev - 'ry hard - ship
4 With hum - ble spir - it
5 By speech that's truth - ful
6 To cease op - pres - sion
7 By lov - ing jus - tice
8 With gen - tle kind - ness

Assembly

1 In all af - flic - tion
2 With great en - dur - ance
3 In ev - 'ry hard - ship
4 With hum - ble spir - it
5 By speech that's truth - ful
6 To cease op - pres - sion
7 By lov - ing jus - tice
8 With gen - tle kind - ness

Refrain

re - turn, re - turn to God.

HYMN FOR COMMUNION

Let Us Break Bread Together

ELW 471

Refrain:

“When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.”

1. Let us break bread together on our knees;
2. Let us drink wine ...
3. Let us praise God ...

MUSIC FOR COMMUNION

O Welt, ich muss dich lassen
(O Bread of Life from Heaven)

G. Winston Cassler
tune, Heinrich Isaac

TABLE BLESSING

LEAVING TO SERVE

CHORAL BENEDICTION

O God, You Search Me

text, Psalm 139, adapt.
text / music, Bernadette Farrell

*O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.*

*Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God my present, my past and future, too.*

SENDING HYMN	As the Winter Days Grow Longer	ACS 924
---------------------	--------------------------------	---------

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

During the season of Lent we omit the Postlude and provide space for reflection following worship.

BLC Pastors

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Additional musical leadership provided by:

Cantors: Donna Berner, Andy Gates, Nancy Price, Dave Wideman

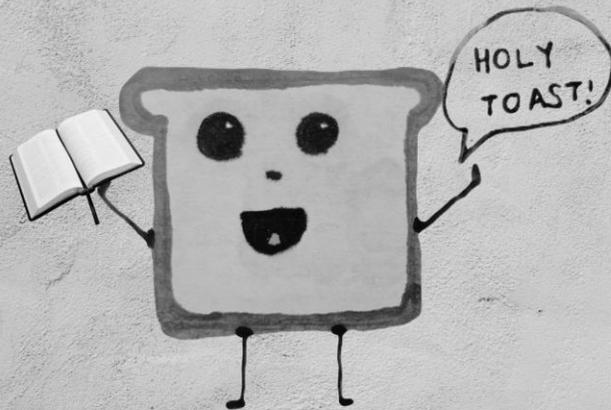
Thank you to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with one of the pastors following worship or send an email to volunteersupport@blcfairport.org and we'll follow up!

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Sandy Squires holds office hours on Wednesdays from 9-1 and is responsive to phone and email Monday through Friday during usual business hours. Please communicate your needs through the church office by phone (585) 223-0634 or by email office@blcfairport.org. Our co-Pastors are available Sunday – Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling the church office or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org

Sunday Table - March 1st



Join us in the
Fellowship Hall
BLC Mid-Week
Bible Study will host.
Stay afterwards for
games, fun and
conversations.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)

SAVE THE DATE!

JULY 20-23, 2026

AT ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN IN PITTSFORD

BLC is partnering with St. Paul's, Pittsford again
for this **FREE** summer's VBS program!

Augsburg Fortress resources are being livestreamed by permission. All rights reserved.
From *Sundays and Seasons.com*. Copyright 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #43732.

Permission to stream and print the music in this service obtained from One License under Annual License #A-724002

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide

Holy Communion, Setting Three; Music: Richard W. Hillert © 1978, 2006 Richard W. Hillert (adm. Augsburg Fortress)

“Our Help Is from the Lord”, Text of Psalm Response © Lectionary of Mass, 1997, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corp.

Text of Psalm Verses © Lectionary for Mass, 2001, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc.

Music: Craig Colson and Kristen Colson, Arranger: Ed Boldue, Music © 2016, World Library Publications

“Jesus, Lead Thou On”, Tune: Adam Drese - SEELENBRÄUTIGAM, Music: Paul Manz, © 1978 Concordia Publishing House

© 1989 MorningStar Music Publishers

“If You Search with All Your Heart”, Words: Jeremiah 29:11-14, adapt., Music Craig Courtney (ASCAP), © 1994 Beckenborst Press, Inc.

“Create in Me a Clean Heart”, Music: J. A. Freylinghausen

“O Welt, ich muss dich lassen” – O Bread of Life from Heaven, Tune: Heinrich Isaac, Music: G. Winston Cassler

© 1975, Augsburg Publishing House

“O God, You Search Me”, Text and Music: Bernadette Farrell, © 1992, Bernadette Farrell (adm. Oregon Catholic Press)

Questions Come to Light

What is it about the night that invites questions? As our head rests on the pillow and shadows stretch out on the bedroom wall, questions, like field mice, begin to emerge from the nooks and crannies of our mind. At first, the questions are utilitarian: Did someone let the dog out this evening? Are the kids' lunches packed for school? When am I going to get to the grocery store this week? And then, without warning, the questions morph: Is Grandma going to recover from this illness? Why are my prayers so short these days? Does Jesus really care about us—about me? At this point we know that night has truly descended. Truth uttered in darkness. Naked honesty feels much safer, much less exposed when light's reach seems a day away.

Maybe that is why we can relate to Nicodemus. For when did Nicodemus come to Jesus? By night! Though we can easily skip over the setting's description in this gospel encounter, it is so very important. With shadows dancing in the torchlight, Nicodemus makes his way to Jesus, beset by questions he can ask only under cover of darkness. Though the darkness is Nicodemus' security blanket, he cannot help himself. Like a moth fluttering in the night sky, Nicodemus is irresistibly drawn to the light. Not just any light: Jesus, the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. As people filled with our own questions, we follow in the furtive footsteps of Nicodemus, falsely believing our naked honesty will remain hidden in the gloom of night. But the Spirit, through the light of Christ, calls us out from the shadows, and in fact, exposes us to the brilliance of God's love—a love that meets our questioning hearts with nothing less than life eternal.