

# Ask

a Lenten series

*Sunday, February 26, 2023*  
*First Sunday in Lent*



# BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org)  
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

**Sunday, February 26, 2023 ~ *First Sunday in Lent***

## Prelude

O Gott, du frommer Gott, op. 122, no. 7  
(O God, Thou Faithful God)

Johannes Brahms

## Announcements

*Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.*

## **GATHERING**

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Please join me as we confess our sins together. Consider: Where have you gone wrong this week? How have you harmed your relationship with God, with your neighbor, and with yourself?

*Silence for reflection*

We confess our sins together.

**We know we have harmed each other and damaged our relationship with you. We create distractions to hide what we have done. We point our fingers at the faults of others. We interrogate those who have no reason to lie. And we avoid you. What have we done? Is it too late to receive your forgiveness?**

Friends, + Jesus died to reveal the limitless depth of God's love. You can doubt this love. But you can never change the truth of it. God knows all and forgives all.

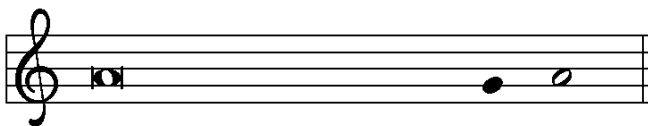
**We embrace your mercy, and we thank you, God.**

## GREETING

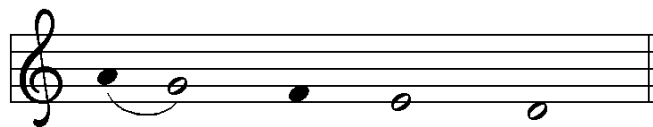
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

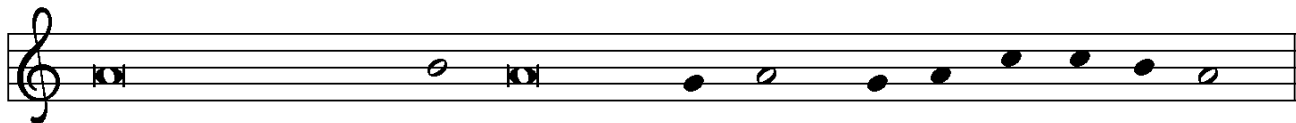
## KYRIE



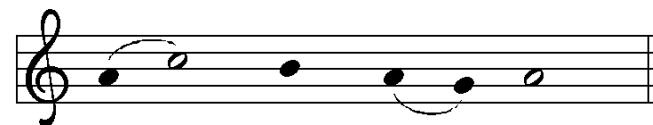
In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



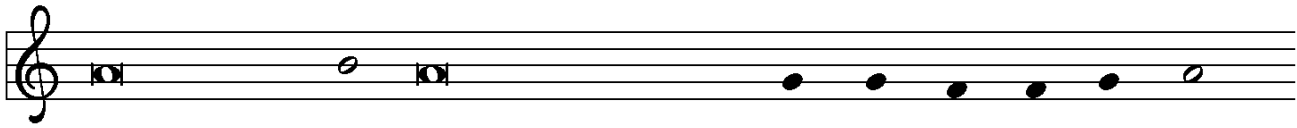
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



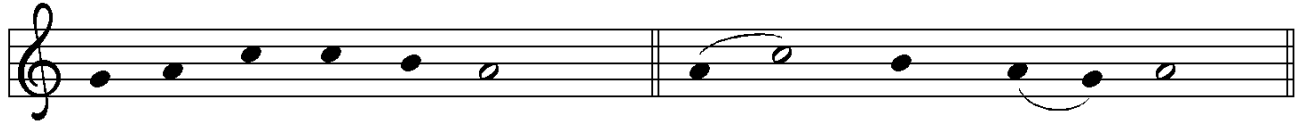
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

Lord have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord.

A - men.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us 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

*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 the room across the hall from the side entrance to the sanctuary. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.*

#### READING: Genesis 3:1-13a

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed

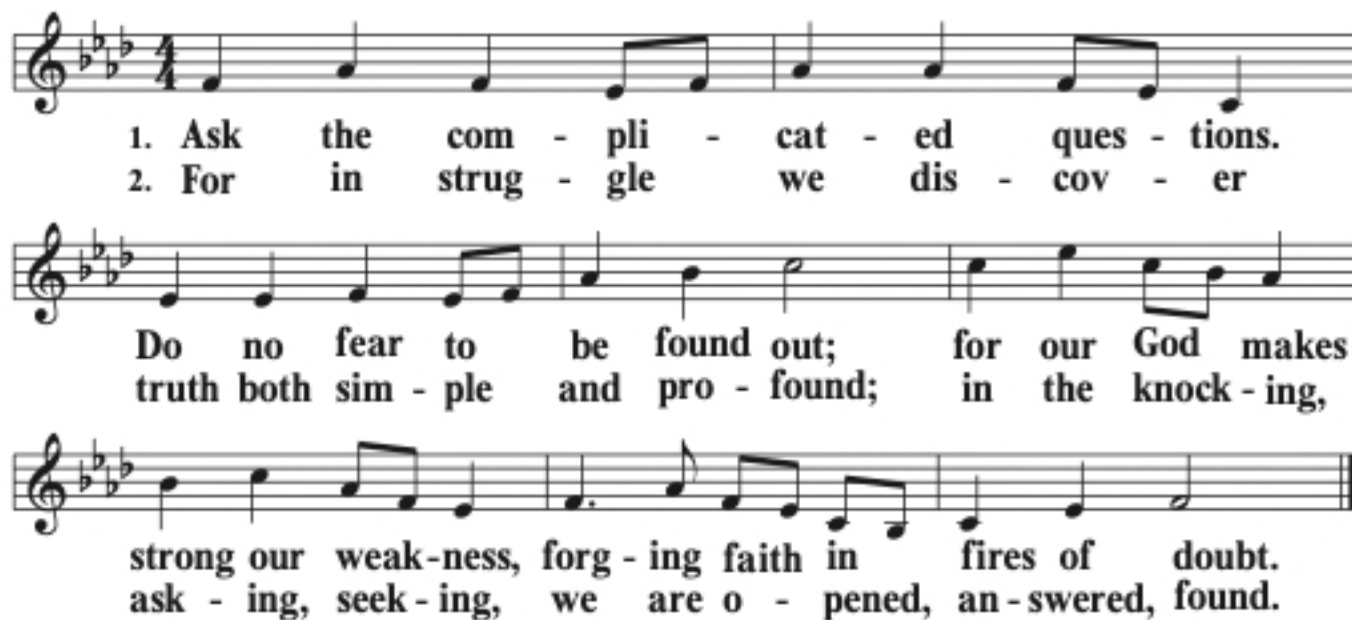
fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

<sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the Lord GOD walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord GOD among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the Lord GOD called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." <sup>11</sup>He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" <sup>12</sup>The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup>Then the Lord GOD said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
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1. Ask the com - pli - cat - ed ques - tions.  
2. For in strug - gle we dis - cov - er

Do no fear to be found out; for our God makes  
truth both sim - ple and pro - found; in the knock - ing,

strong our weak-ness, forg - ing faith in fires of doubt.  
ask - ing, seek - ing, we are o - pened, an - swered, found.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11

*Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup>But he answered, "It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,’  
and ‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.’ ”

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.  
The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	I Want Jesus to Walk with Me	ELW 325
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APOSTLES’ CREED

For some, the Apostles’ Creed is like liturgical muscle memory: You can say it without thinking about it.

Today we ask you to affirm your faith by answering questions so you might truly consider what you believe. If you feel unable to affirm your faith today, listen to those around you. Borrow some faith from them as we share these ancient words.

Do you believe there is a God who made us?

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

Do you believe this God sent a child named Jesus to save this world?

**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.**

Do you believe the Holy Spirit animates our faith and empowers the church today?

**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.**

#### THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

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

#2 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.**

#3 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.**

We give thanks that in baptism you form us into community. Today we pray for these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Christina (Annika), Maribeth, Desiree, Marjorie, and Glen & Jane. We also pray for our sisters and brothers in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of compassion, you know our needs better than we ourselves. Hear the prayers that we offer you now.

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

- Maddie B., daughter of Kathy F.'s friends, who died on 2/14
- Tim M., husband of Linda M., who died on 2/10

*We pray for those in need of healing, especially:*

- Clarence G., father of David G., who began a course of nuclear radiation on 2/23
- Crystal, friend of John C., who is facing a personal challenge
- Ginny S., who is experiencing health issues and undergoing testing
- Taylor H., niece of Kathy M., as she faces treatment decisions
- Joanne S. who is recovering from knee replacement surgery
- Michele, friend of Donna & Jim B., who is living with multiple health challenges
- Mark F., who is recovering at home following surgery
- Those who are caregivers for loved ones
- Those who are ill from Coronavirus and all who care for them

Hear these prayers we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

*Silence for individual prayer.*

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.**

### **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

*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](http://blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry).*

#### OFFERING OF MUSIC

Be Thou My Vision

*SLANE*

Irish folk tune

arr. Katherine Jordahl Larson

The Chancel Bells

*assisted by Sue Cardinal, flute*

## OFFERTORY

## Holden Evening Prayer Psalm 51 vs. 4



## OFFERTORY PRAYER

We join in prayer:

**God, what will you do with these gifts? We may never know. But we carry a faith passed to us through generations. We set the table with food and drink harvested by many hands. We break the bread of answered prayers. Use the gifts we give today to grow tomorrow's mercy. Amen**

## HOLY COMMUNION

Where is our God?

**God is here in this place.**

Where are your hearts?

**We have given them to God.**

What shall we do in the presence of our God?

**We shall give our thanks and praise.**

The night before Jesus died, the people who knew Jesus best were hungry for answers.

**They wondered where they should prepare the meal. They wondered what would happen next.**

And as Jesus spoke of impending betrayal, each of them wrestled with a personal question:

**Is it me?**

But what Jesus did around a table that night meant they never had to worry about those questions again. Jesus' answer was to take bread.

He 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.

When we eat this bread and drink this cup  
**we never have to question your love for us, Great God.**  
Now send the Spirit into this meal and into our hearts.  
**Blend this food and drink with holiness.**  
**Fuse our searching souls with your perfect friendship,**  
**and we will become people who delight in what you have done**  
**and joyfully wonder what you shall make of us today. Amen**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus, you asked us to ask you for anything we need. So we pray:

**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

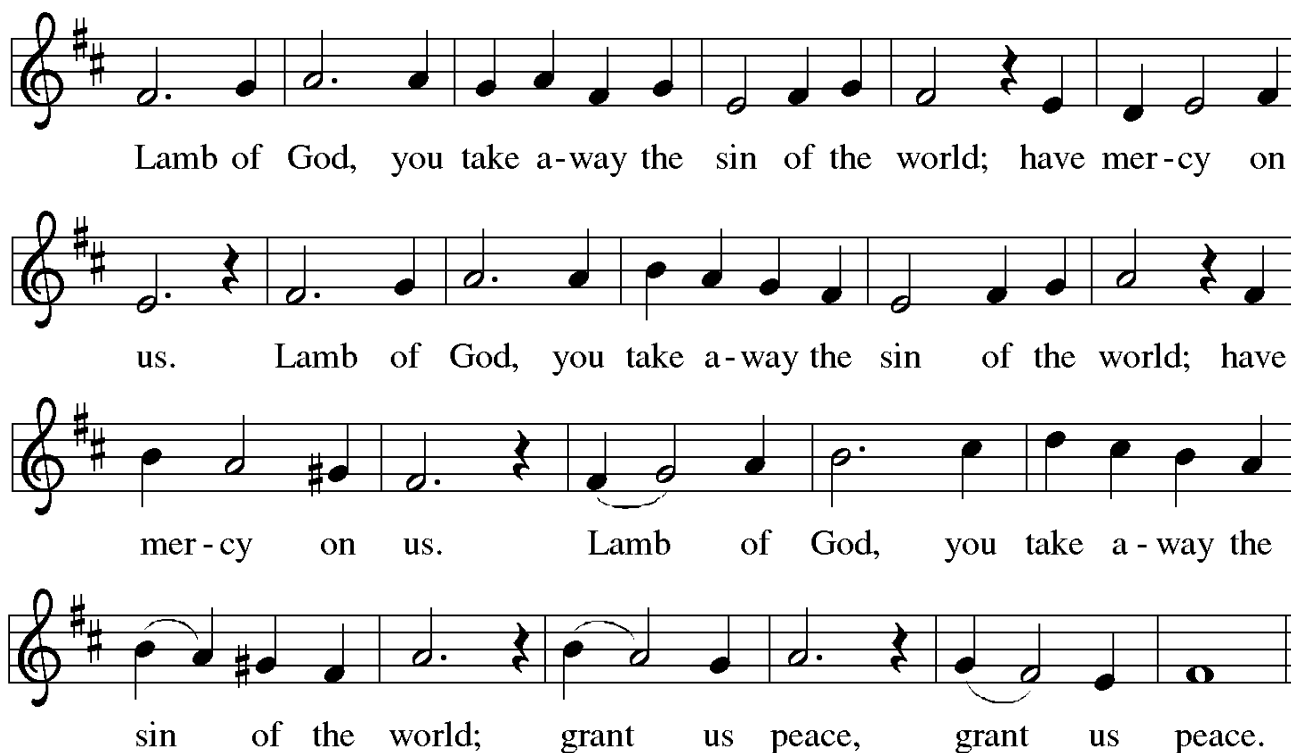
Your questions are welcome. You are welcome. God wants you at this table.

**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. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.*

## 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, grant us peace.

### COMMUNION HYMN

Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery

ELW 334

final stanza – Lent 1

### COMMUNION HYMNS

Bread of Life, Our Host and Meal

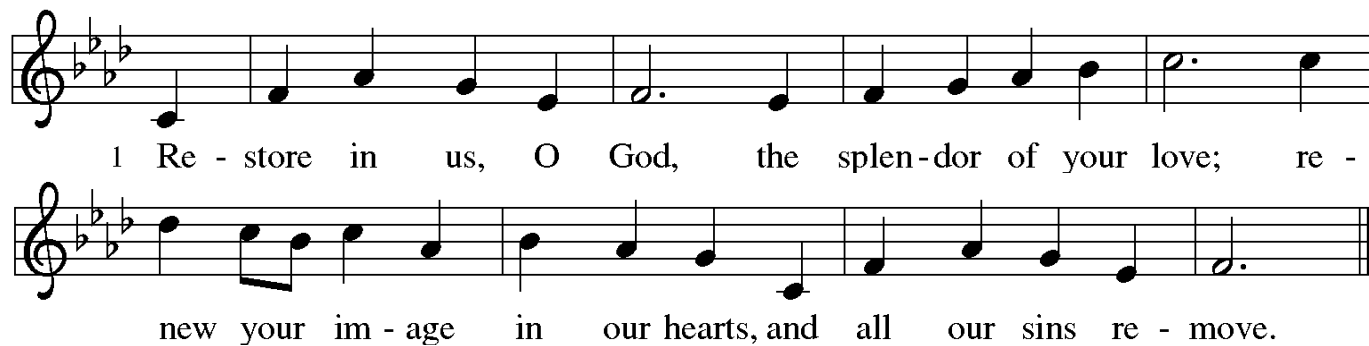
ELW 464

Praise and Thanks and Adoration

ELW 783

## TABLE BLESSING

### POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



1 Re - store in us, O God, the splen - dor of your love; re -  
new your im - age in our hearts, and all our sins re - move.

### LEAVING TO SERVE

#### BENEDICTION

God, the giver of love, ✠ Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth bless you in this Lenten journey.

**Amen.**

SENDING HYMN	Bless Now, O God, the Journey	ELW 326
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#### DISMISSAL

In the name of Jesus our Savior, go from this sanctuary into a world hungry for God's love.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### POSTLUDE

Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan  
(What God Ordains Is Always Right)  
Variations: I, IV, VIII

Johann Pachelbel

## **BLC Musicians**

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

**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? Fill out the survey on the table in the narthex and place it in the basket or speak with a pastor.

**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](http://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](mailto:office@blcfairport.org) or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

**Church office hours:** Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585)223-0634 or emailing [pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org) or [pastor.amy@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.amy@blcfairport.org).

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[Adapted by Pastor Amy Walter-Peterson and Pastor Abigail Hoffman.]



## **The Devil Doesn't Wear Tights**

No one believes in the existence of the devil these days, do they? Do you? Perhaps we can thank Hollywood and Halloween's marketing blitz for our casual if not incredulous approach to the devil's existence. Pointy horns, pitch forks, red costumes, and box office ticket sales continue to shape our culture's collective consciousness of the devil. Though red tights and long tails may be a frightening thought as you consider a costume for a Halloween party, they do nothing to communicate the true terror of an honest-to-God encounter with the devil's power.

This Lent we are called to expunge the fantastical images of the devil from our minds and think seriously about the real presence of evil in our world. We know firsthand about the sin that caused, causes, and will cause suffering to us, our loved ones, our neighbors, our global communities, and creation itself. Sin is real; suffering is real; evil is real; indeed, the devil is real. This oppressive, tangible reality is as real as the air we breathe—felt but not always seen. Greed, envy, rage, hatred, war, discrimination, and apathy are just some of the ways the devil's forces wreak havoc upon us. These forces have one goal and one goal only: to turn us away from the will of God.

Matthew's gospel reorients us to the truth of the devil's power, and calls us to name Satan's presence in the world. In the wilderness Jesus encounters an evil as real as its opposite, resurrection. The great tempter seeks to undermine Jesus' mission before he even begins; testimony that evil has much to fear of our Jesus! Nonetheless, Jesus will not be dissuaded. "Away with you, Satan!" proclaims the redeemer of the cosmos. Thus, the Lenten journey begins—a journey that takes us to the cross, where the devil is named and crushed underfoot.