

Ask

a Lenten series

Sunday, March 5, 2023
Second Sunday in Lent



BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Sunday, March 5, 2023 ~ *Second Sunday in Lent*

Prelude

RATHBUN (Meditation)

Ithamar Conkey
setting, Robert J. Powell
(ELW 324)

Announcements

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at Easter. 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

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.

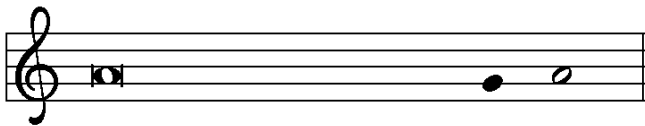
GREETING

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

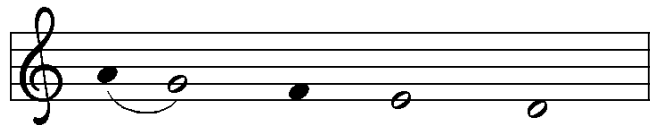
And also with you.

KYRIE

assisted by Andy Gates, cantor



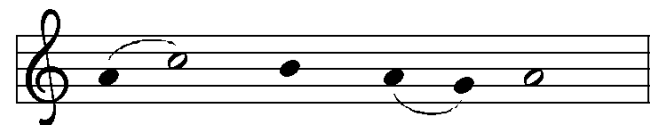
In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



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.



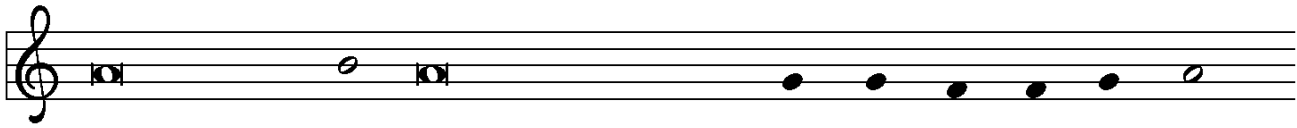
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



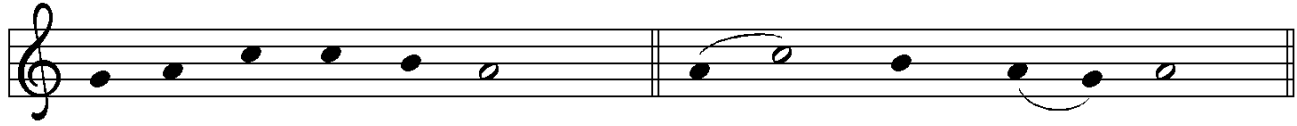
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



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. 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

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.

PSALM: Psalm 121

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills —
from where will my help come?

²My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

³He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

⁶The sun shall not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil;

he will keep your life.

⁸The LORD will keep

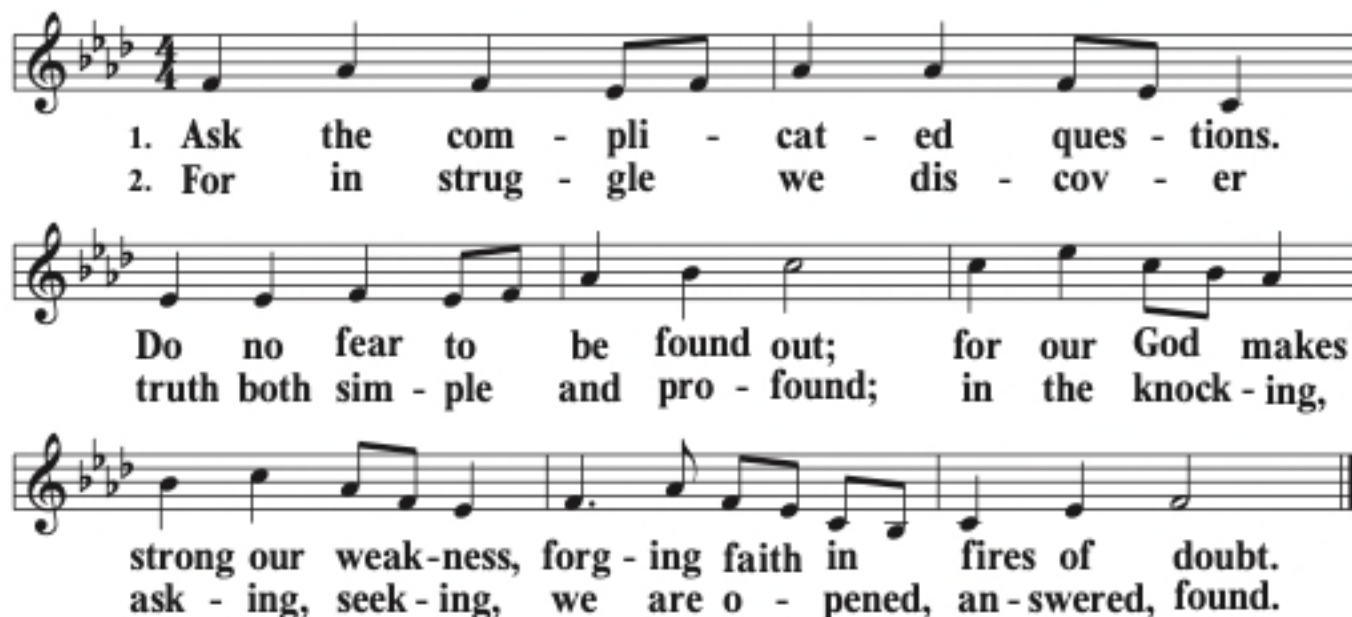
your going out and your coming in

from this time on and forevermore.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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 John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: John 3:1-12

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that

I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	In Christ Alone
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assisted by cantors: Sarah Morrisette, David Wideman

Cantors: st. 1

All: sts. 2, 3, 4

In Christ Alone



1. In Christ a - lone my hope is found; He is my
 2. In Christ a - lone, who took on flesh, full - ness of
 3. There in the ground His bo - dy lay, light of the
 4. No guilt in life, no fear in death - this is the



light, my strength, my song; This cor - ner - stone, this so - lid
 God in help - less babe! This gift of love and right - eous -
 world by dark - ness slain. Then burst - ing forth in glo - rious
 pow'r of Christ in me. From life's first cry to fi - nal



ground, firm through the fierc - est drought and storm. What height of
 ness, scorned by the ones He came to save. Till on that
 day, up from the grave He rose a - gain! And as He
 breath, Je - sus com - mands my des - ti - ny. No pow'r of

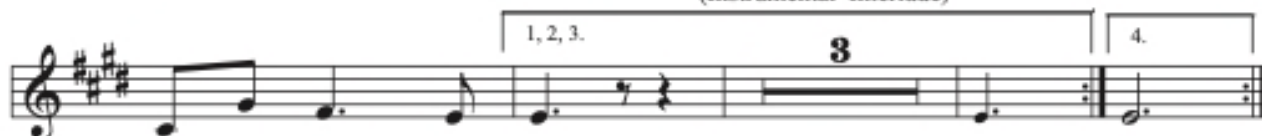


love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when striv - ings
 cross as Je - sus died, the wrath of God was sa - tis -
 stands in vic - to - ry, sin's curse has lost its grip on
 hell, no scheme of man, can e - ver pluck me from His



cease! My com - for - ter, my all in all - here in the
 fied; for ev - ery sin on Him was laid - here in the
 me; for I am His and He is mine - bought with the
 hand; Till He re - turns or calls me home - here in the

(Instrumental Interlude)



love of Christ I stand.
 death of Christ I live.
 pre - cious blood of Christ.
 pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

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 O God, we lift our eyes to see the beauty of your creation, even in the midst of the cold and ice. Breathe new life into our planetary home. Guide the work of researchers, scientists, and activists who love your earth and who inspire us to care for the natural world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#2 O God, you so love your children. Bless the young in our midst, and delight us with their joy, wonder, and curiosity. Help those of us who are young at heart to recapture their joy, wonder and curiosity. Revive our ministries with children and youth and equip us all for faithful discipleship. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#3 O God, you so love your saints. As our ancestors in the faith have been a blessing to us, so inspire us by their example of holy living to be a blessing to those who come after us. 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: Dwight & Jan, Marcy & Tom, Brian & Melissa (Delaney, Emelia & Noah), Karen & Tom, and Leslie & Mark (Avery, James & Tyler). 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

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Chick F., who is facing health challenges
- Clarence G., father of David G., who anticipates beginning a course of nuclear radiation
- Crystal, friend of John C., who is facing a personal challenge
- Ginny S., who is facing health challenges
- Taylor H., niece of Kathy M., as she faces treatment decisions
- 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

And Can It Be?

words, Charles Wesley
music, Howard Helvey

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



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

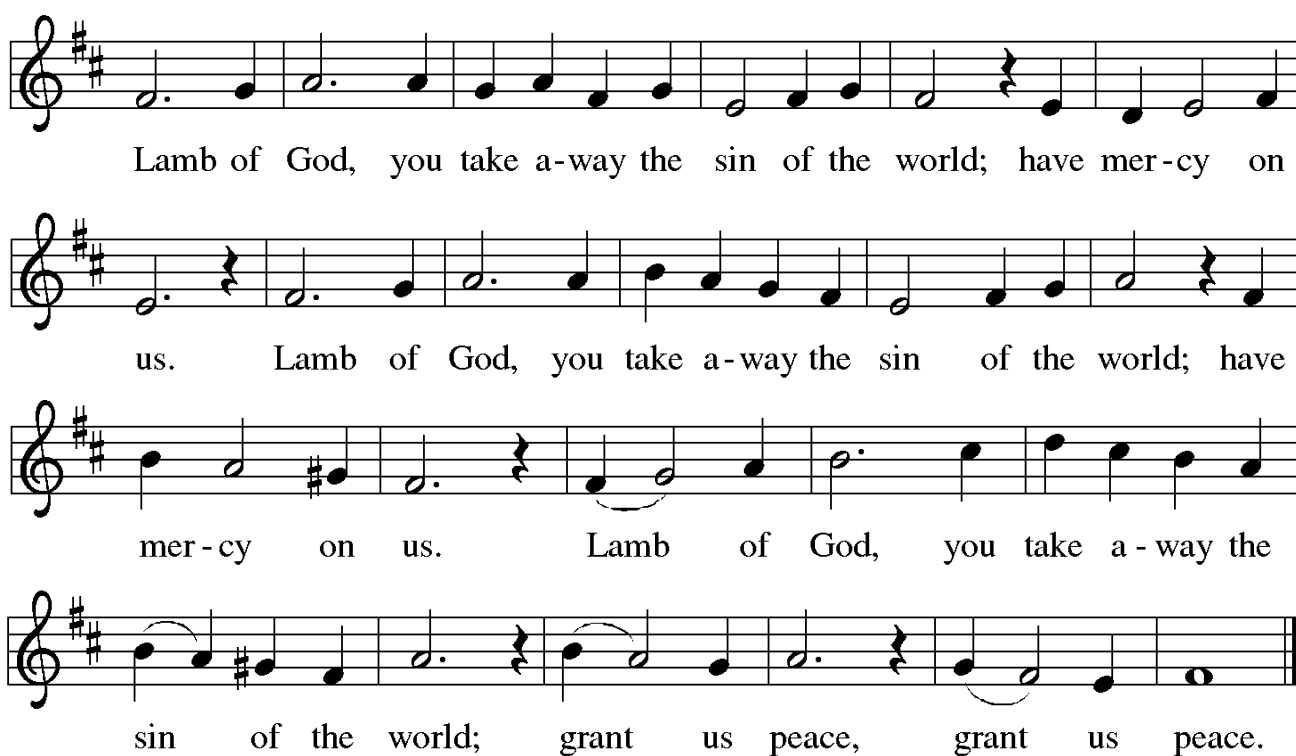
Your questions are welcome. You are welcome. God wants you at this table.

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 HYMNS

O Living Breath of God

ELW 407

Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth

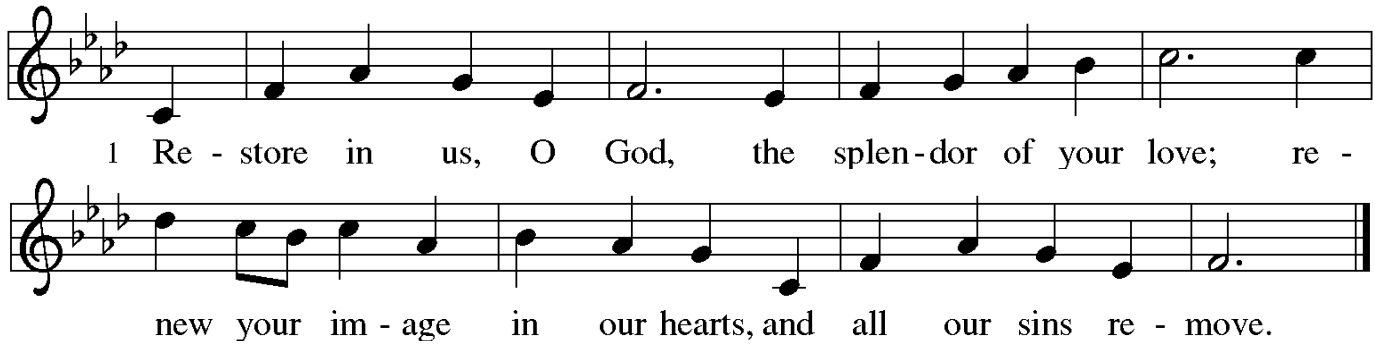
ELW 735

Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters

ELW 445

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	Lift High the Cross	ELW 660
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DISMISSAL

Go now in the name of our Savior Jesus, who always listens when we pray.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Toccata in C major, P. 455

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. 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: 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 or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

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

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.