

# Beyond Human Time

*Sunday, November 26, 2023*  
*Extended Advent 3*





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, November 26, 2023**

PRELUDE

Thanks Be to Thee  
Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

G.F. Handel  
arr. Lani Smith

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Today our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. Each Sunday we gather to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.*

**GATHERING**

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather today.

**It is time to worship!**

We listen for God

**It is time to hear!**

We receive God's grace.

**It is time to be loved!**

We leave in peace.

**It is time to serve others!**

As we wait for Jesus' arrival, Emmanuel, God-with-us, is already here in this time and place.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

With God, there is always time for forgiveness. We trust God, and we confess our sins together.

*Brief pause*

Holy One,

**We have not stayed awake. We have missed you when you appeared in our neighbors, in strangers half a world away, in the suffering planet. We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us and assumed we were powerless to mend the breaches in our world. Sometimes, we have given up on your mercy, justice, and love. Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts. Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done. Amen.**

People of God, hear this good news: In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness gives us the courage we need. Wherever we wait for God's time to come, we will witness wonders.

**Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN

Crown Him with Many Crowns

ELW 855

GREETING

The grace of God, who was, who is, and who is to come, be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

KYRIE



Lord, have mer - cy\_\_ on your peo - ple. Christ have mer - cy\_\_ on\_\_ us.  
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.\_\_ Chri - ste e - le - i - son.



Shine your light in\_\_ to our\_\_ dark - ness. Fill\_\_ us\_\_ with your ho - ly love.  
Heal all\_\_ con - flicts be - tween na - tions. Teach us\_\_ how to\_\_ live as one.



Be our strength in times of\_\_ trou - ble. Set us free from chains that\_\_ bind.  
Show us how to love our\_\_ neigh - bor. Run to those who\_\_ cry for\_\_ help.



Breathe new\_ life in - to our\_\_ spir - its. Pu - ri - fy our\_\_ hearts and minds.  
Word made flesh who lives a - mong us; Christ our\_\_ Lord, Em - man - u - el.

## LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” (Matthew 25:37-39)

Let us pray. Giver of all good things:

You give us our days on this earth, but we determine how to use them.

When we don't know what's right, when we fail to care for others, when we don't recognize you, reveal yourself to us.

As we light another Advent candle, remind us that you are the one who gives purpose for our days and direction for our deeds.

**Amen.**

*The Advent candle will be lit as we sing:*



The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and suitable for children's singing. The lyrics are written below each staff.

We light the Ad - vent can - dles a - gainst the win - ter night,

to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light,

to wel - come our Lord Je - sus who is the world's True Light.

## **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.*

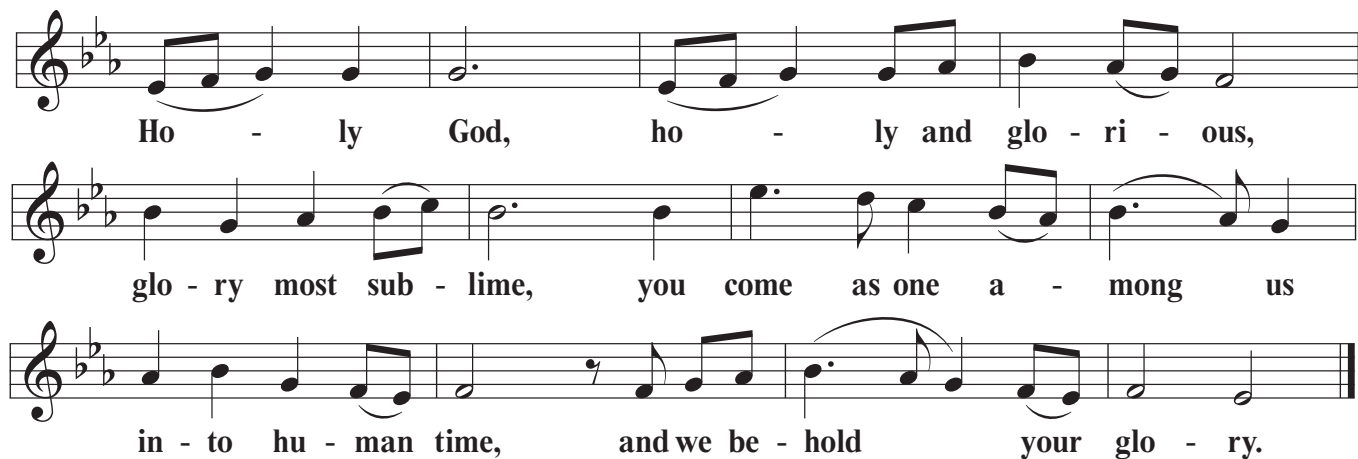
### READING: Ephesians 1:15-23

*In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.*

<sup>15</sup>I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, <sup>18</sup>so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. <sup>20</sup>God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. <sup>22</sup>And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

#### GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46

*Jesus compares himself to a king who moves among his subjects to see how he is treated: what is done for the least of those who belong to his family is truly done for him.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>31</sup>“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand,

‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us	ELW 431
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THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

People of God, we are each other’s kin, and we are family with all creation. As we wait and yearn for God, we pray together for our community, for the church around the world, and for every need.

*A brief silence.*

#1 In Christ we feel the depth of your love and care toward us. Nourish all who hunger, connect any who are isolated, and surround all who experience rejection or abuse. We pray for those who hunger for acceptance, hunger for love, hunger for peace, teach us to release our simple gifts to others freely that they may be filled. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

#2 In Christ we are made the people of his pasture. Inspire the outreach and social ministries of this congregation, especially the Pines of Perinton food distribution, 2nd Sunday Dinner Ministry and Perinton food shelf. We pray for all people who serve and attend to the needs of others. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

#3 Holy God, in Christ we are welcomed home. We praise you for the faithful witness of those who have served you and extended your welcome and love to us, family, friends, those whom we do not know, but extend themselves to us, Unite us with them as one body of Christ. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Come, Lord Jesus to neighbors far and near. Deepen our kinship with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Bob & Wendy, Justin & Kelly (Aaron, Allison), Andrew, John & Kristine (Lauren), and Nate. Strengthen the ministries we share with others, especially our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Come, Lord Jesus to all who are hungry, thirsty, ill, or experiencing any struggles.

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

- Jim T, brother-in-law of Sue T, who died on 11/12
- Marrgy S, cousin of Ruth G, who died on 11/12

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

- Sue T who is underdoing treatment for Bell's Palsey
- Carol, friend of Kathy M, who is hospitalized with heart failure
- Mary S who is recovering from a broken hip
- Morey R who is recovering from a recent hospitalization



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

*Silence for individual prayer.*

Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God, you are always with us. We gather these prayers together, and we entrust them to your endless love in the name of Jesus.

**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).

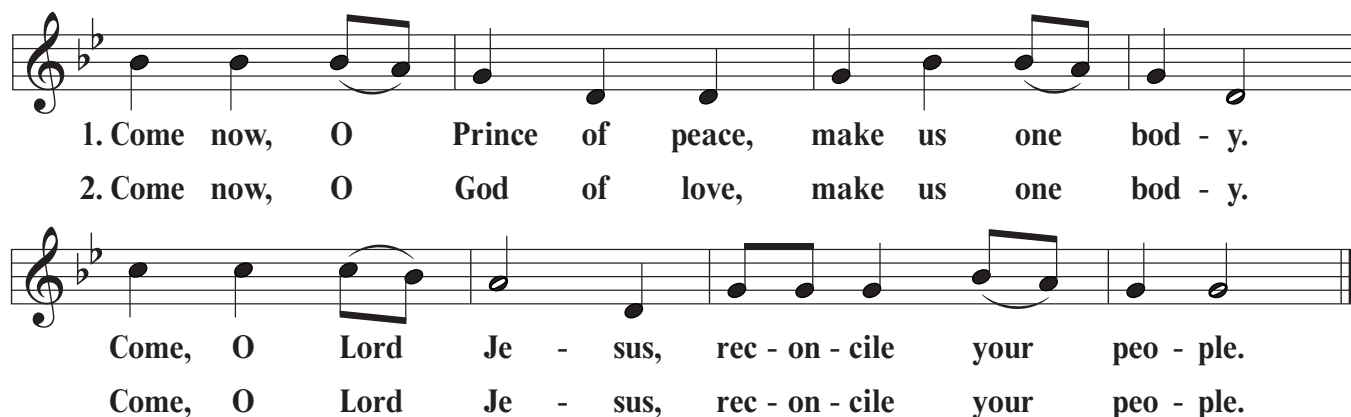
OFFERING OF MUSIC

Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord

Psalm 100  
Jim Jefferis

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



1. Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y.  
2. Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y.

Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.  
Come, O Lord Je - sus, rec - on - cile your peo - ple.

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Loving God, for the time we have, and for the gifts we offer, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the chance to help others, and for the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the ways you are changing the world, we say:

**Thank you.**

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

**Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

God, our Creator

**the abundance of your goodness overflows into creation.**

Through the generations

**your goodness continues to flow in friendship with humanity.**

From beyond time into this moment

**your goodness comes in this meal.**

When the time was right, you entered our human existence in Jesus, who was born humbly, who spent his life with the unlikely and unloved, who healed and taught and preached the good news of your way.

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

**Jesus is here with us, in this moment, in this time and place.**

Whenever we share this bread and cup,

**God takes us out of time and joins us with God's people in every time and place.**

Whenever we share this bread and cup, we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Send the Spirit of your presence on us now, O God, so that we too will overflow with goodness.

**Strengthen us by this meal, so that through us, your presence will flow out in mercy, justice, and love. Amen**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

We prepare for you, praying as you taught us,

**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

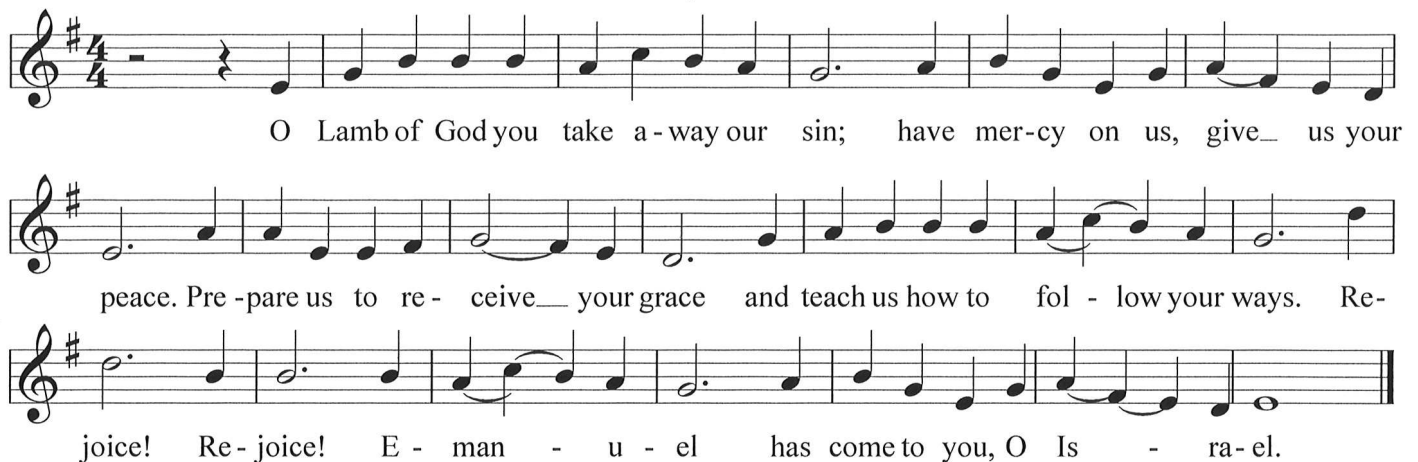
The time is now! Taste and see God's goodness!

**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



O Lamb of God you take a-way our sin; have mer-cy on us, give\_ us your

peace. Pre-pare us to re- ceive\_ your grace and teach us how to fol - low your ways. Re-

joice! Re- joice! E - man - u - el has come to you, O Is - ra- el.

# COMMUNION HYMN

## You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd

ACS 954



1 You, Lord, are both Lamb and Shep - herd.  
 2 Clothed in light up - on the moun - tain,  
 3 You, who walk each day be - side us,  
 4 Wor - thy is our earth - ly Je - sus!



You, Lord, are both prince and slave.  
 stripped of might up - on the cross,  
 sit in pow - er at God's side.  
 Wor - thy is our cos - mic Christ!



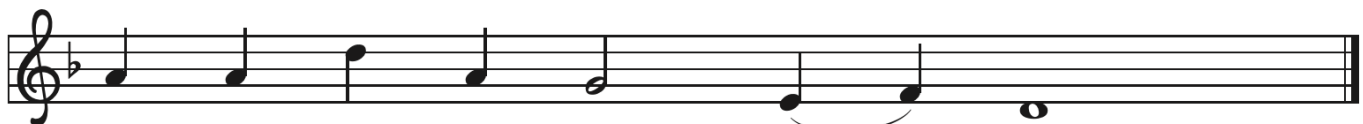
You, peace - mak - er and sword - bring - er  
 shin - ing in e - ter - nal glo - ry,  
 You, who preach a way that's nar - row,  
 Wor - thy your de - feat and vic - t'ry;



of the way you took and gave.  
 beg - gared by a sol - dier's toss,  
 have a love that reach - es wide.  
 wor - thy still your peace and strife.



You, the ev - er - last - ing in - stant;  
 you, the ev - er - last - ing in - stant;  
 You, the ev - er - last - ing in - stant;  
 You, the ev - er - last - ing in - stant;



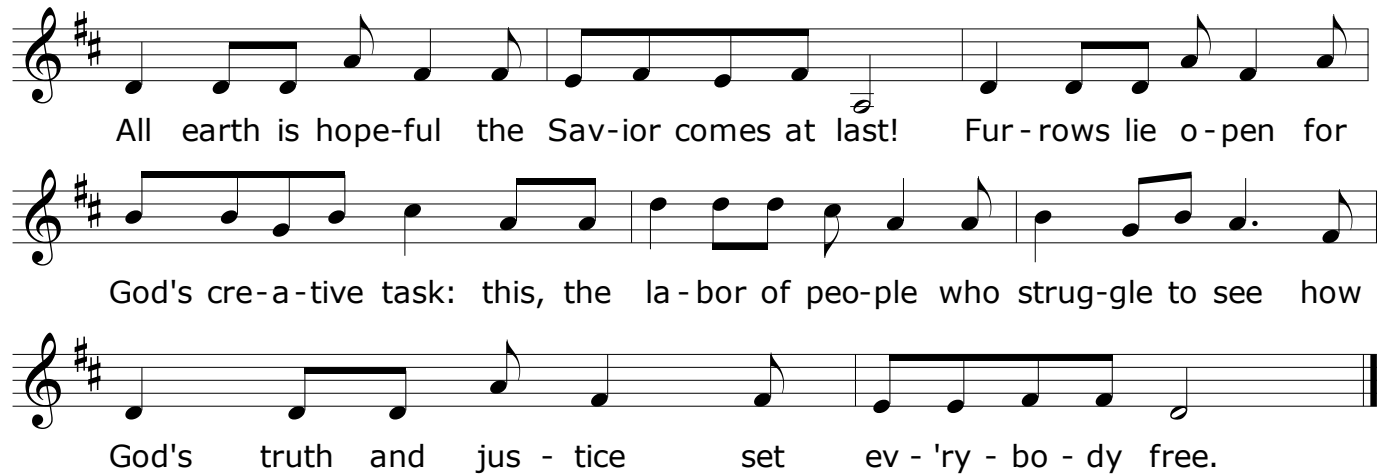
you, whom we both scorn and crave.  
 you, who are both gift and cost.  
 you, who are our pil - grim and guide.  
 you, who are our death and life.

COMMUNION HYMN  
For the Fruit of All Creation

ELW 679

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



All earth is hope-ful the Sav-ior comes at last! Fur-rows lie o-pen for  
God's cre-a-tive task: this, the la-bor of peo-ple who strug-gle to see how  
God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bo - dy free.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

God our Creator, present before time; ✠ Jesus our Redeemer, arriving at the right time; The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, acting in our time; Bless you now and always. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

Now Thank We All Our God

ELW 839

DISMISSAL

Keep alert: trust God; go in peace.  
**Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Overture from the Suite in D Minor

Johann Krieger

## **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** Chris Gates for serving as our guest musician today while Raelynn is away.

**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 Mark Finke or one of the pastors following worship or contact Mark directly at [volunteersupport@blcfairport.org](mailto:volunteersupport@blcfairport.org).

**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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You, Lord, Are Both Lamb and Shepherd: Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993; Music: PICARDY, French folk tune, 17th cent.

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## **We Embody the Presence of Christ**

It is possible that the biggest barrier to accepting this as our lifelong vocation is not a lack of faith but a lack of imagination.

On this final Sunday of the liturgical year, we receive a parable from Jesus challenging and inspiring our imaginations to grasp our whole vocation that is celebrated in baptism: to embody Christ in every moment and to engage every part of our world as Christ's redeemed creation.

The parable of the sheep and the goats has sometimes been used to instill fear of God's judgment. However, it is possible that Jesus' point here is to urge his disciples to share God's generous saving grace with all. Jesus' parables consistently offer a simple setting and story, but behind them lie a world of rich meaning that takes a lifetime to unpack. For this reason, Jesus' parables are important texts for the postmodern church, which is hungry for story, for connection, and for meaning for our faithful lifelong questions.

With shepherding texts from Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24 and Psalm 95:1–7a as well as Ephesians, an epistle written to build faith, we have a constellation of texts that make the shape of God's intimate—even incarnational—love of creation. The parable even suggests that being merely intentional about ministry in the name of Jesus is not the point. After all, both “sheep” and “goats” groups are equally shocked at the news that Jesus was present in those relationships involving thirst, imprisonment, and so forth. Instead, Jesus seems to invite us to wonder what's at the deepest foundation of our presence and purpose—and perhaps even walk away faithfully bewildered at the possibilities of God's kingdom being practiced on earth as it is in heaven.

What if we really do embody the presence of Christ?