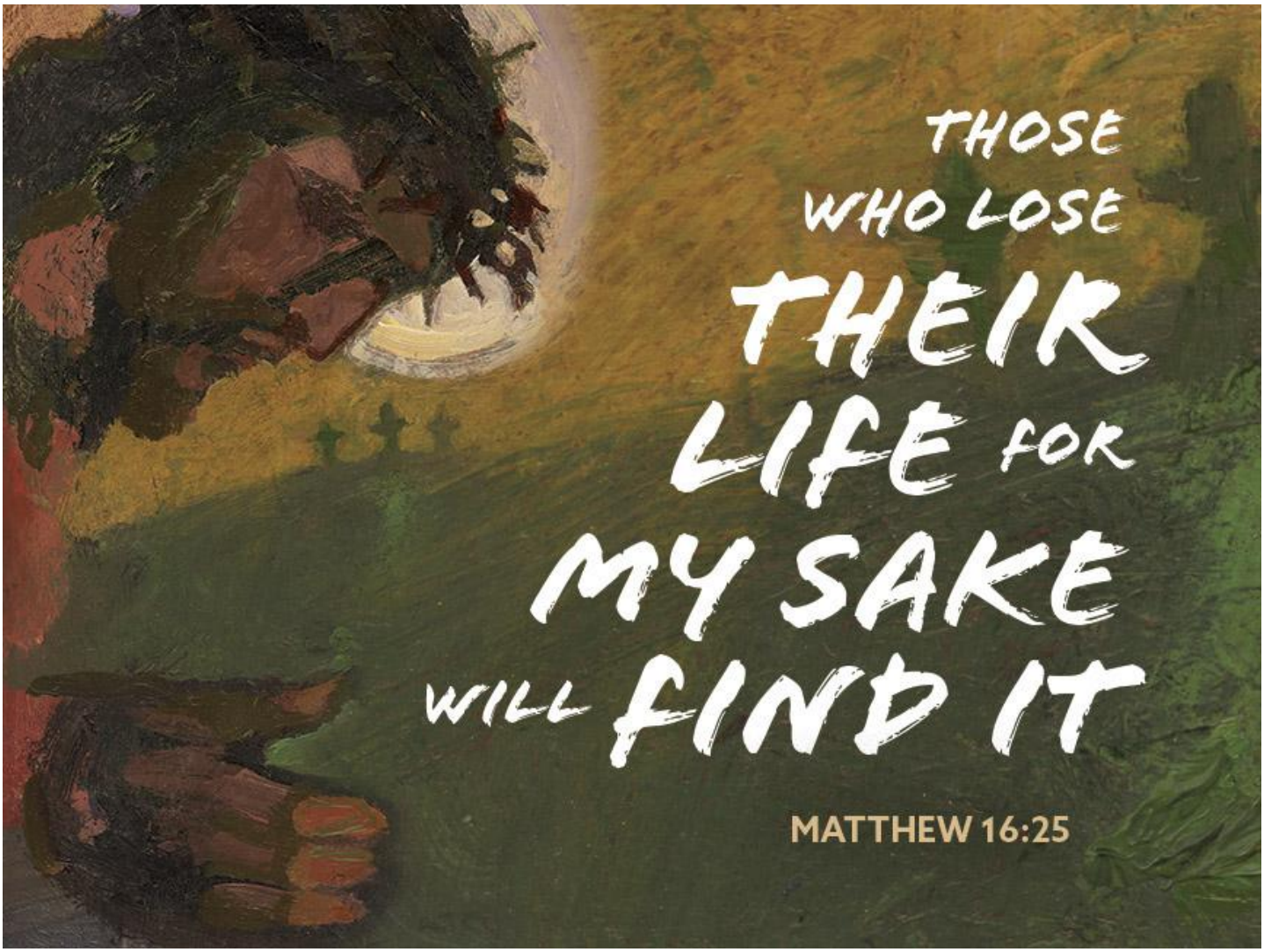


Sunday, August 30, 2026
14th Sunday after Pentecost

BETHLEHEM
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

PRELUDE

The Old Rugged Cross — James Koerts
tune, George Bennard

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the incurable wound of his suffering yet finds in God's words the delight of his heart. When Peter doesn't grasp Jesus' words about suffering, Jesus tells the disciples they will find their lives in losing them. Such sacrificial love is described by Paul when he urges us to associate with the lowly and not repay evil with evil. In worship we gather as a community that we might offer ourselves for the sake of our suffering world.

Red hymnal - **ELW** - Evangelical Lutheran Worship
Blue hymnal - **ACS** - All Creation Sings

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose compassion endures forever.
Amen.

We confess our sin to God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate God,
we confess to you all our sins. Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." In the name of God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. Rest in God's love.
Amen.

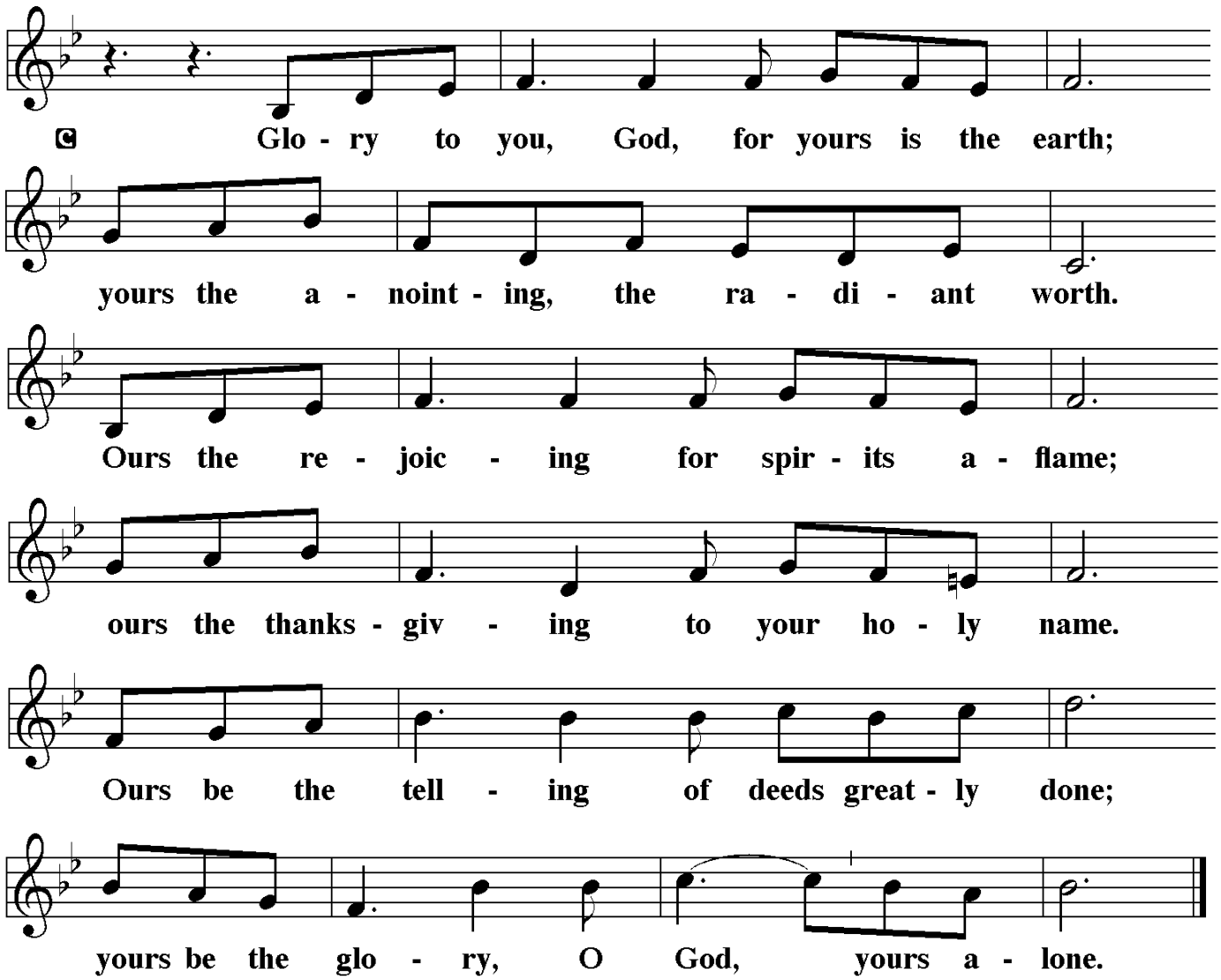
GATHERING HYMN	Lift High the Cross	ELW 660

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.

HYMN OF PRAISE



PRAYER OF THE DAY
Let us pray. O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord
Amen.

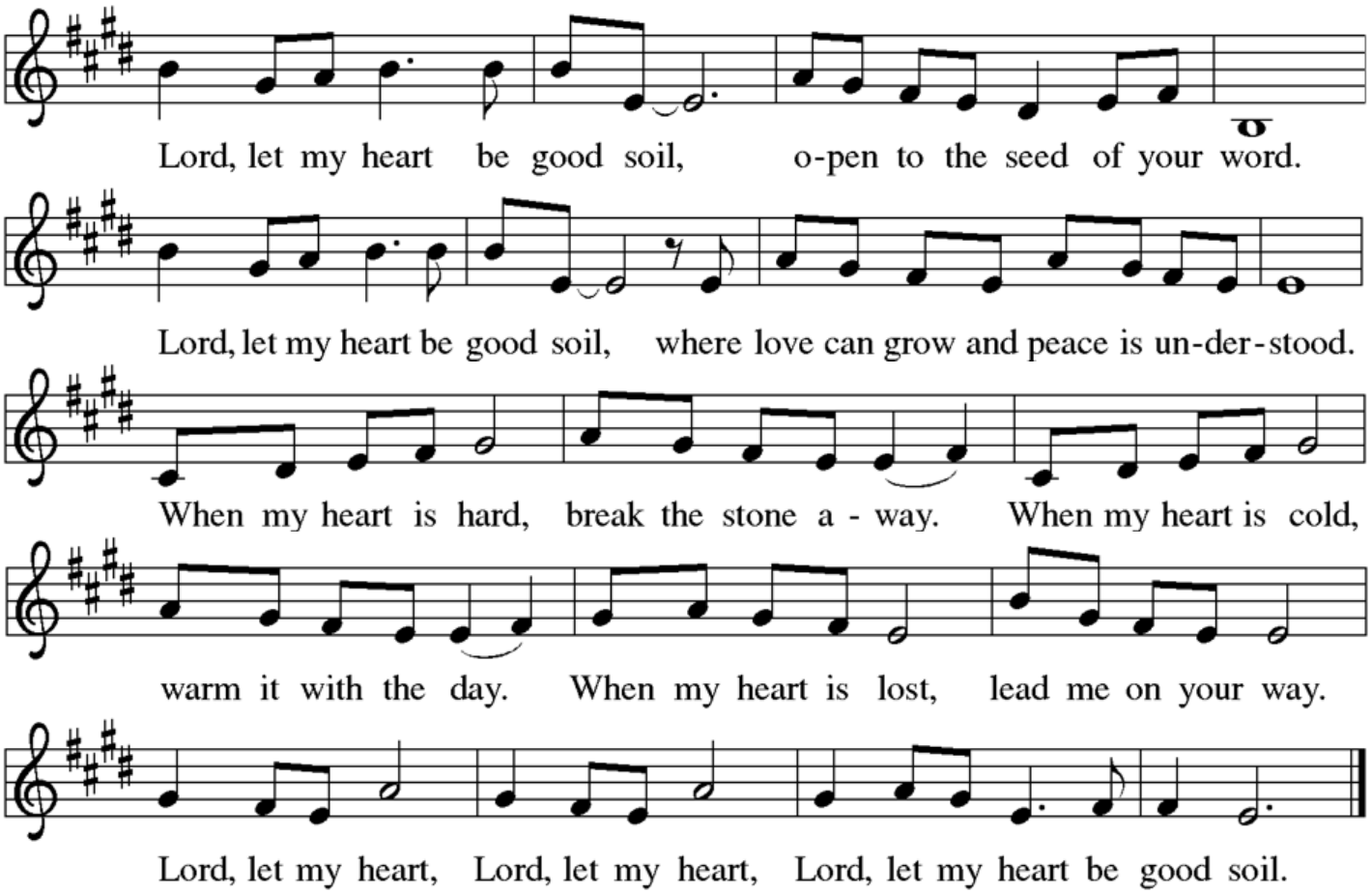
HEARING GOD'S WORD

READING: Romans 12: 9-21
Paul presents benchmarks for faithful relationships with Christians and non-Christians. Love is the unflagging standard of our behavior. When we encounter evil, we do not resort to its tactics but seek to overcome it with good. While Christians cannot control the actions and attitudes of others, we seek to live at peace with all people.

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; 10 love one
another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in
zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction;
persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to
strangers.
14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with
those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one
another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser
than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is
noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live
peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the
wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the
Lord." 20 Instead, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give
them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their
heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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

GOSPEL: Matthew 16: 21-28

After Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16), Jesus reveals the ultimate purpose of his ministry. These words prove hard to accept, even for a disciple whom Jesus has called a "rock."

21 From that time on, [after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah,] Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

[24] Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. [25] For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. [26] For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

[27] “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. [28] Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY	Spirit, Open My Heart	ACS 1043

APOSTLES’ CREED

Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

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

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church and the needs of the world.

A brief silence.

#1 For the church in every land, that its mission and ministry is anchored in the love of Christ. When threats or challenges arise, teach us to take up our cross and follow you in faith. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

#2 For the well-being of your creation, that all that lives and grows on the earth may thrive. Bring relief to areas ravaged by droughts, floods, fires, storms, and other disasters. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

#3 For the nations and all in authority, that they seek to live in peace with one another. Bless the work of international and diplomatic organizations and all who work to bring peace to a world scarred by violence.
God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are beginning and returning to college this year and those who work to educate and support them in their education; and for our siblings in faith in our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. In all our endeavors, remind us that we who are many, are one body in Christ. God of grace.
hear our prayer.

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 grieve, especially the family and friends of:

- Marilyn R, former BLC member living in Georgia, who died 8/11
- Marianne, friend of the Meetze family, who died 8/13

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Allison, cousin of Chris M, who has entered hospice care
- Joyce, sister-in-law of Mark F, who is in the ICU
- Pr. Amy Walter-Peterson as she recuperates following hip replacement surgery on 8/14

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

Silence for individual prayer.

God of grace
hear our prayer.

Trusting you receive all our prayers, we commend our spoken and unspoken prayers to you, O God, through Jesus 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.

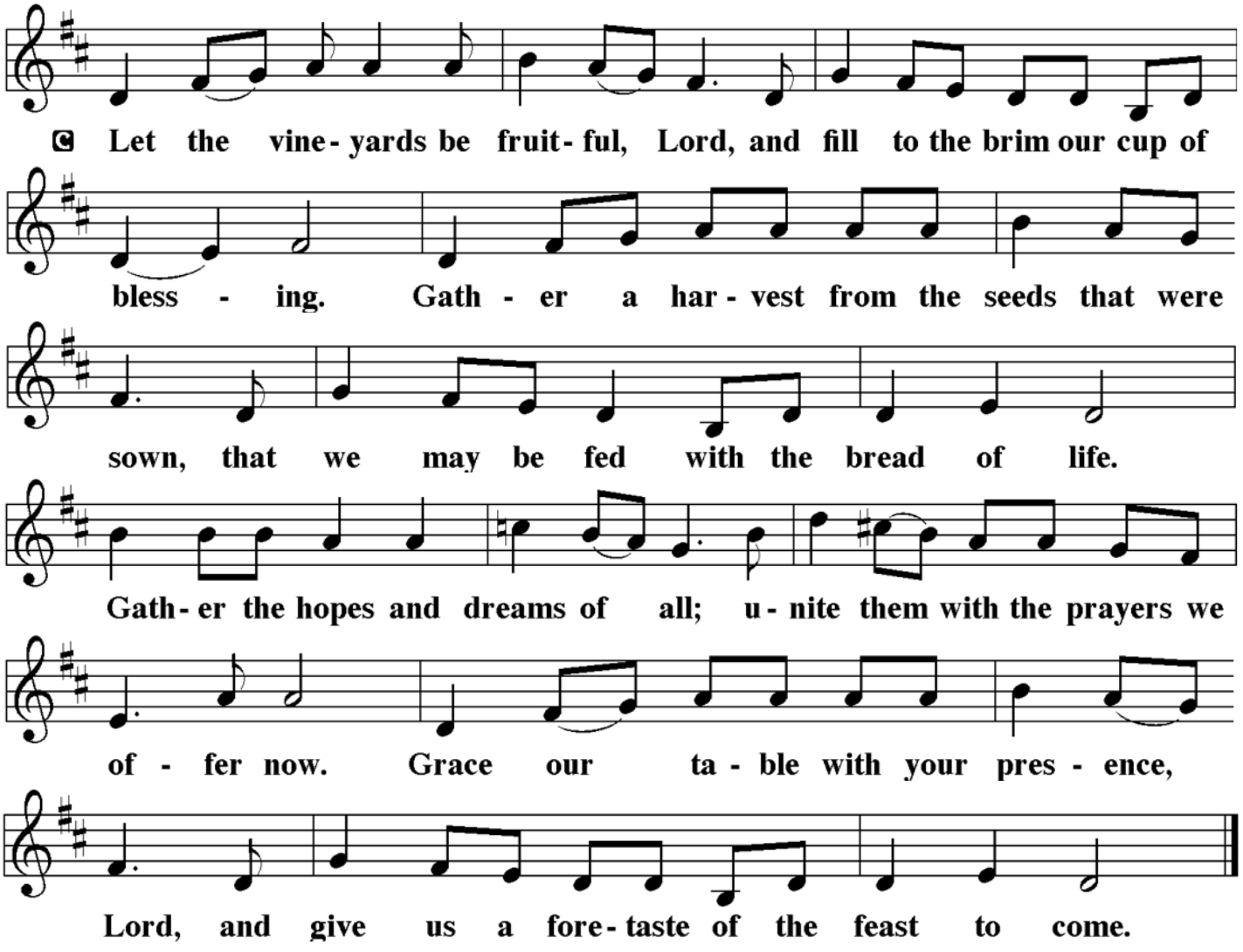
OFFERING

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

Peace — Grant Horsley

OFFERTORY



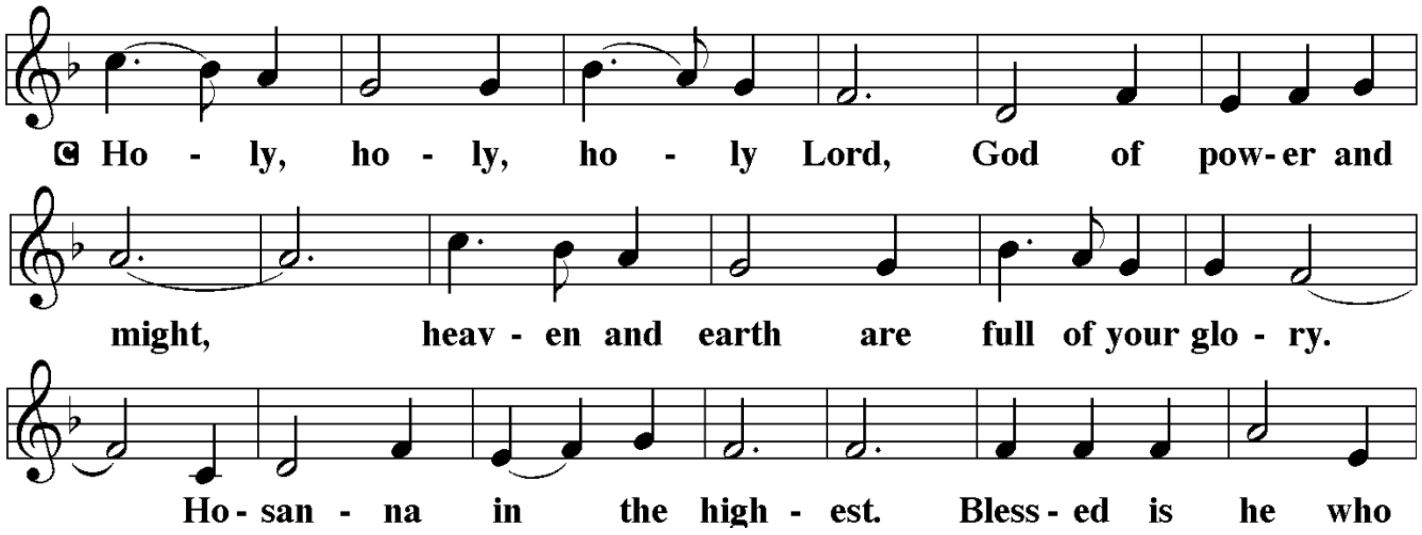
OFFERTORY PRAYER

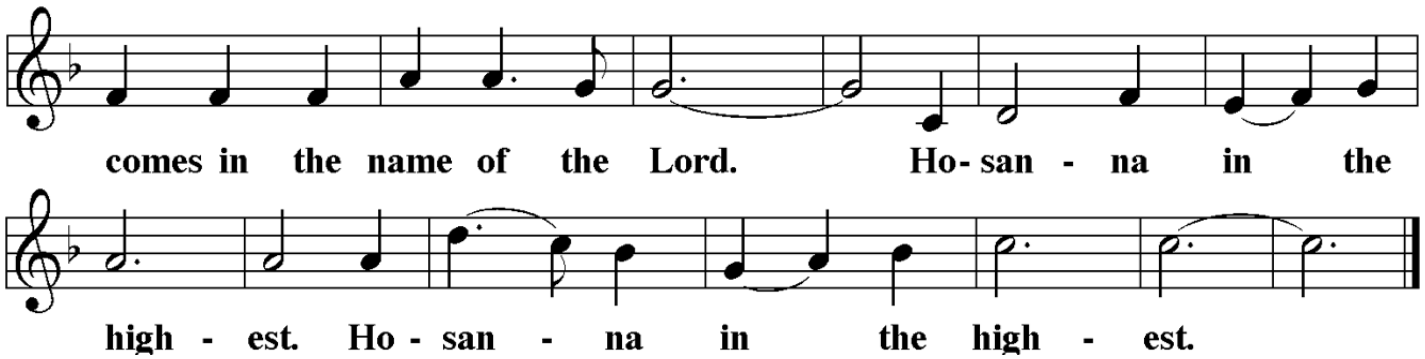
Let us pray. Loving God,
we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:





WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Spirit, we pray as Jesus 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

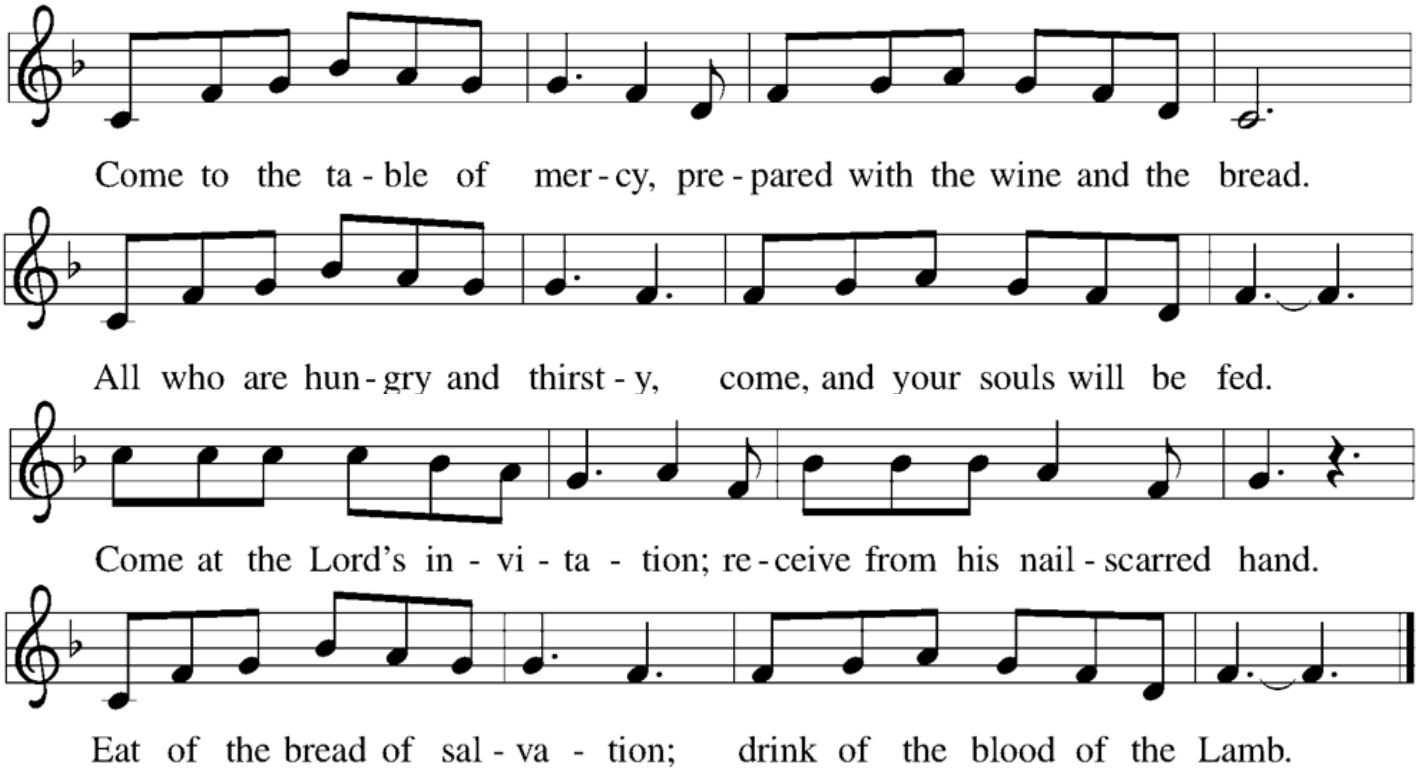
Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast!

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



HYMNS FOR COMMUNION	
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	ELW 656
How Great Thou Art	ELW 856

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray. Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.
Amen.

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ☩ one God, bless, heal, and hold you today and always.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN	Will You Come and Follow Me	ELW 798

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the good news!

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Lift Up Your Heads! — Paul Fey

(incorp. TRURO – ELW 389) — tunes, Michael Praetorius / T. Williams

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:
Andy Gates, clarinet

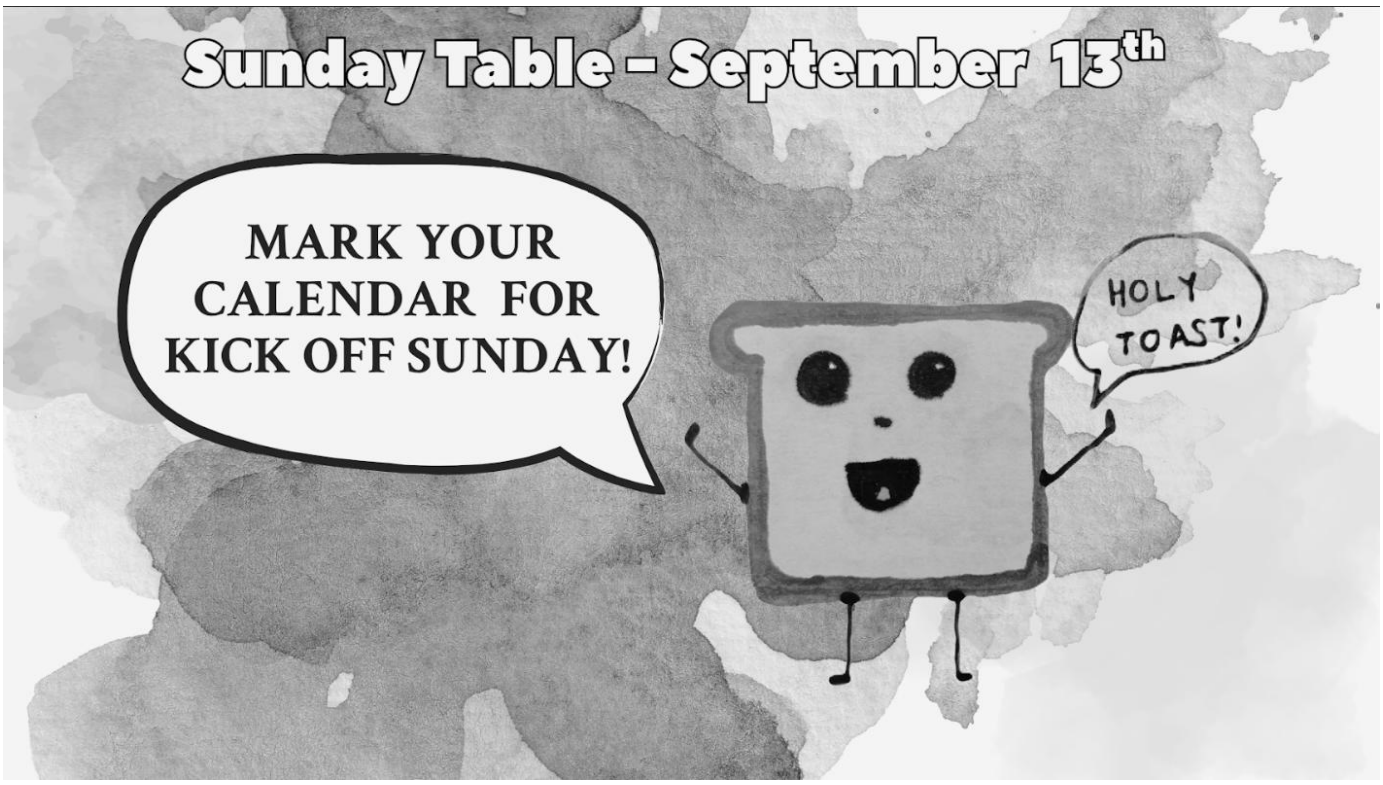
Thank you...to Pastor John Macholz, who is leading worship today. Pastor Macholz is former Bishop of the Upstate NY Synod and former Pastor of Atonement Lutheran Church in Brighton. Welcome, Pastor Macholz!

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



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"Glory to You, God", All Creation Sings – Holy Communion, Setting 12, Text: Susan Palo Cherwien
Music: J. Bert Carlson, © 2020 Augsburg Fortress
With One Voice - Holy Communion, Setting Five, Music: Jeremy Young, © 2000, Augsburg Fortress
Gospel Acclamation: "Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil", Text and Music: Handt Hanson
© 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing, Changing Church, Inc.
"The Old Rugged Cross", Tune: George Bennard, Arranger: James Koerts
© 2023 James Koerts (koertsmusic.com)
"Peace", Music – Grant Horsley, © 2020 grant horsley music
"Lift Up Your Heads!" , Tunes: Michael Praetorius / TRURO – T. Williams
Arranger: Paul Fey, © 2023 Paul Fey

There Must Be Another Way

Peter may be the "rock" on which Christ will build the church (Matt. 16:18), but when Jesus reveals the suffering that will come first, Peter becomes a tempter and stumbling block. Assuming God must have a different way to save the world, Peter protests Jesus' suffering and death. Jesus explains to Peter and all his disciples that, in fact, this is the way to life—losing one's life in order to find it.

By tempting Jesus to an easier way than his journey through suffering to resurrection, Peter personifies a temptation common to all generations of Jesus' disciples: seeking a way to avoid "losing oneself" instead of surrendering all to and with the one we follow. Rather than losing our lives—our selves, possessions, and time—we hold on more tightly, afraid of what will happen to our comfort, success, and identity if we let go. Those things we hold onto then become, like Peter, stumbling blocks along the way of self-giving love.

But while "saving one's life" sounds sensible, those things also stand in the way of the new life into which Jesus beckons us to follow him. Perhaps Peter's problem is that he sees only the suffering and death, without grasping the new life that comes through it. In times when we too are tempted by worldly ways of comfort and success, convinced that surely God must have an easier way than the way of self-giving love, this gospel reminds us that resurrection and life await on the other side of suffering and death.

This is the way of our God who becomes human in Jesus: emptying himself of power and dignity, losing his very own life for the sake of the world's life. Seen through the lens of resurrection just ahead on the journey, what other way could there be?