

# ST. PETER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

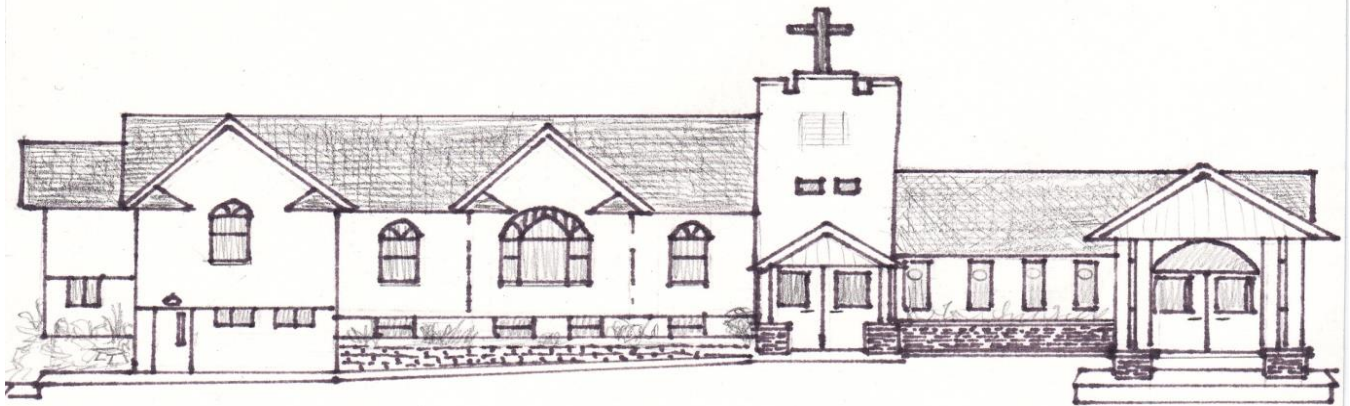
Stpeterlutheranchurch.net

13221 W. Todd School Rd.

Glasford, Illinois 61533

309-389-5342

Pastor Raymond Barclay



*Sketch drawn by Alice Diver*

Sunday, April 21, 2024

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

HOLY COMMUNION

**PRELUDE: ORGAN / CLAVINOVA**

**[\*] REQUESTS YOUR RISING IF COMFORTABLE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP BY OUR CHURCH BELL**

**GREETINGS**

**THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE DAY:**



### **Introduction to the day**

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

*VERSE OF THE DAY:*

**DEUTERONOMY 31:6**

*"The LORD your God goes with you; je will never leave you nor forsake you"*

**\*ENTRANCE HYMN *Have No Fear, Little Flock* (LBW 476)**

## Have No Fear, Little Flock



1 Have no fear, lit - tle flock; have no fear, lit - tle  
2 Have good cheer, lit - tle flock; have good cheer, lit - tle  
3 Praise the Lord high a - bove; praise the Lord high a -  
4 Thank - ful hearts raise to God; thank - ful hearts raise to



flock, for the Fa - ther has cho - sen to  
flock, for the Fa - ther will keep you in  
bove, for he stoops down to heal you, up -  
God, for he stays close be - side you, in



give you the king - dom; have no fear, lit - tle flock!  
his love for - ev - er; have good cheer, lit - tle flock!  
lift and re - store you; praise the Lord high a - bove!  
all things works with you; thank - ful hearts raise to God!

Text: Luke 12:32, st. 1; Marjorie Jillson, b. 1931, sts. 2-4  
Music: LITTLE FLOCK, Heinz Werner Zimmermann, b. 1930  
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**\*BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (WOV p. 10)**

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P 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.

C **Amen**

P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

P Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are in bondage 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**

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen**

**\*INVOCATION (WOV p. 28)**

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

**C** **And also with you.**

**\*KYRIE (WOV p. 28)**



**A** Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son:      **C** Lord, have mer - cy.  
*Lord, . . . . have mer - cy:*

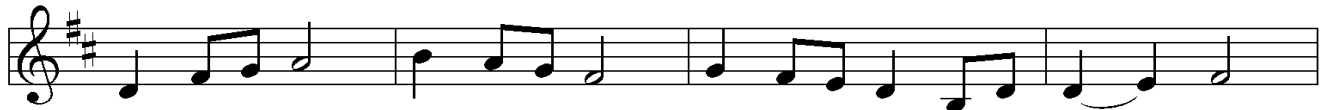


**A** Chri - ste e - le - i - son:      **C** Christ, have mer - cy.  
*Christ, . . . . have mer - cy:*



**A** Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son:      **C** Lord, have mer - cy.  
*Lord, . . . . have mer - cy:*

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE (WOV p. 29)**



**☐** Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



**☐** Lord God, heav-en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we



wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



**☐** Glo-ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God in the high - est;



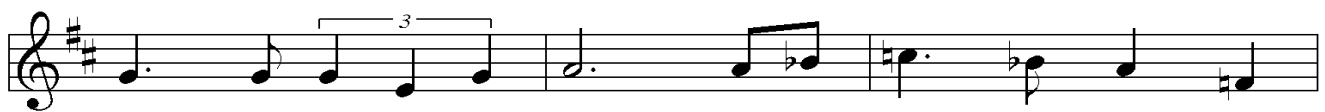
glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



**☐** Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.



**☩** Glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God in the high - est;



glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



**I**  
**II** For you a-lone are the Ho - ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



you a-lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho-ly



Spir- it, in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther, A - men.



**☩** Glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God in the high - est;



glo-ry to God, glo-ry to God, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth,



and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

**\*PRAYER OF THE DAY (WOV p. 30)**

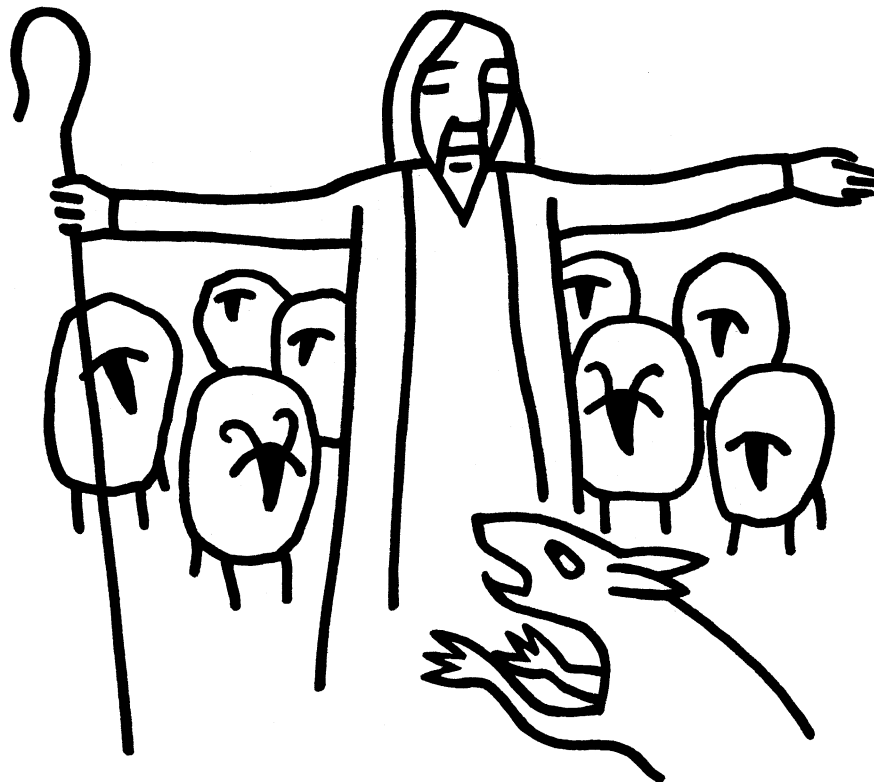
P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray.

P God of all power, you called from death our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. Send us as shepherds to rescue the lost, to heal the injured, and to feed one another with knowledge and understanding; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen**





## **FIRST READING: Acts 4:5-12**

*Peter and John had been arrested the previous day because they were proclaiming the news of the resurrection to the people. In today's reading, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit so that he can proclaim salvation in Jesus' name to the religious authorities.*

A reading from Acts.

<sup>5</sup>The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is  
    'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;  
    it has become the cornerstone.'  
<sup>12</sup>There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

READER The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. (*Ps. 23:1*)

<sup>1</sup>The LORD<sup>1</sup> is my shepherd;  
I shall not<sup>1</sup> be in want.

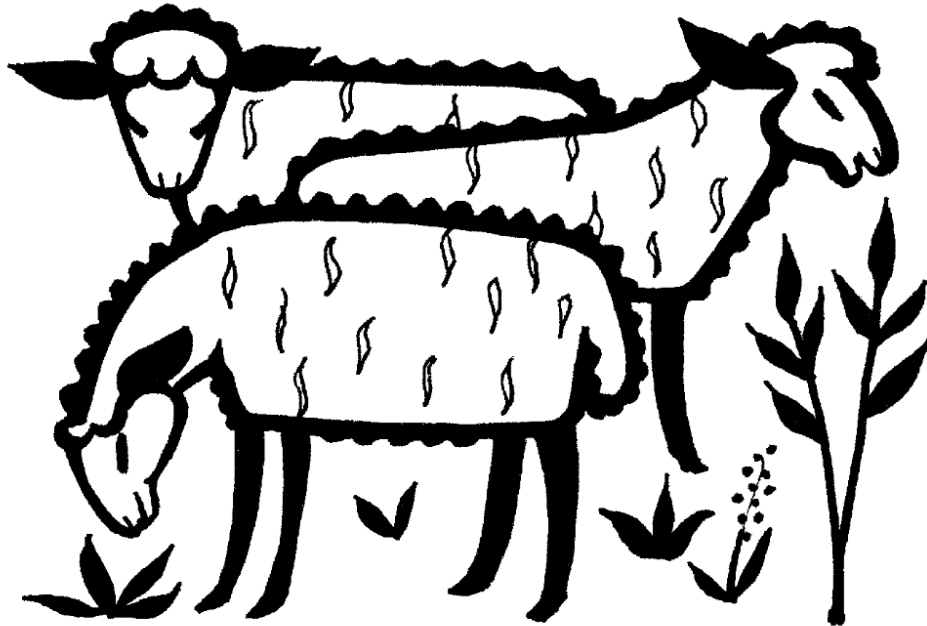
<sup>2</sup>**He makes me lie down<sup>1</sup> in green pastures  
and leads me be-<sup>1</sup> side still waters.**

<sup>3</sup>He re-<sup>1</sup> lives my soul  
and guides me along right pathways<sup>1</sup> for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I shall<sup>1</sup> fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they<sup>1</sup> comfort me.**

<sup>5</sup>You spread a table before me in the presence of those who<sup>1</sup> trouble me;  
you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is<sup>1</sup> running over.

<sup>6</sup>**Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days<sup>1</sup> of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the<sup>1</sup> LORD forever.**



**SECOND READING: 1 John 3:16-24**

*Jesus' death on our behalf is the clearest demonstration of divine love. This is the very love we share with others, not just through our words but especially through our deeds. In sharing such love we fulfill God's commandments.*

A reading from 1 John.

<sup>16</sup>We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. <sup>17</sup>How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

<sup>18</sup>Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. <sup>19</sup>And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him <sup>20</sup>whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup>Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; <sup>22</sup>and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

<sup>23</sup>And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. <sup>24</sup>All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

READER The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

**\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (WOV p. 31)**

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

Al - le - lu - ia. You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**\*GOSPEL: John 10:11-18**

P The Holy Gospel according to John, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter.

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In language that recalls the twenty-third psalm, Jesus describes himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is willing to die for them, and he is able to overcome death for them.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>11</sup>“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup>The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

P The Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON: “By What Name?”**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!* (LBW 144)

## Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!



1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice and sing! Now is the  
2 The Lord of life is ris'n this day; bring flow'rs of  
3 Praise we in songs of vic - to - ry that love, that  
4 Your name we bless, O ris - en Lord, and sing to -



tri - umph of our king! To all the world glad news we bring:  
song to strew his way; let all the world re - joice and say:  
life which can - not die, and sing with hearts up - lift - ed high:  
day with one ac - cord, the life laid down, the life re - stored:



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Cyril A. Alington, 1872–1955, alt.

Music: GELOBT SEI GOTT, Melchior Vulpius, c. 1570–1615

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**\*CREED (WOV p. 32)**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again 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

- P Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.
- P Shepherding God, gather your church whenever we wander from you and one another. Empower our church in ministries around the world to worship and serve alongside global companions as equal partners and coworkers in the gospel. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Nurturing God, preserve the health of biomes and ecosystems. Inspire scientists, researchers, conservation organizations, and all people entrusted with the task of caring for creation, that we may be better stewards of the world around us. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Almighty God, lead nations and communities to share resources, cooperate in solving conflicts, and listen to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Help all those with power to share it and to use such power for good. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Loving God, protect the very young and the very old, those living without housing, victims of domestic abuse, and all who live with chronic illness or compromised immune systems. Guide communities to actively care for people who are vulnerable. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Gracious God, help this and all communities of faith to listen for your voice. Call us away from things that distract us from following you. Invite us to more deeply love and serve people who are lonely, isolated, and on the margins. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Living God, we give thanks for our ancestors in faith (*including Anselm of Canterbury and all who labored to help generations understand the good news of the gospel*). Strengthen us to share the good news in our own day. God of grace,
- C hear our prayer.**
- P Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.
- C Amen.**

**\*PEACE (WOV p. 34)**

**P** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C** **And also with you.**

**P** Let us share God's peace with one another.

**\*PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS (WOV p. 34)**



**☐** Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles - sing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were



sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.



Gath - er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we



of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,



Lord, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.



**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER (WOV p. 35)**

P Let us pray.

P Merciful God,

**C we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

**\*DIALOGUE (WOV p. 36)**

P The Lord be with you.

**C And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

**C We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**\*PREFACE (WOV p. 36)**

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**\*SANCTUS (WOV p. 36)**



**Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and**



**might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.**



**Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who**



**comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the**



**high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.**

**\*GREAT THANKSGIVING (WOV p. 37)**

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,  
who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,  
who preached good news to the poor,  
and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

*In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and 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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,  
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,  
that by this Holy Communion we may know  
the unity we share with all your people  
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

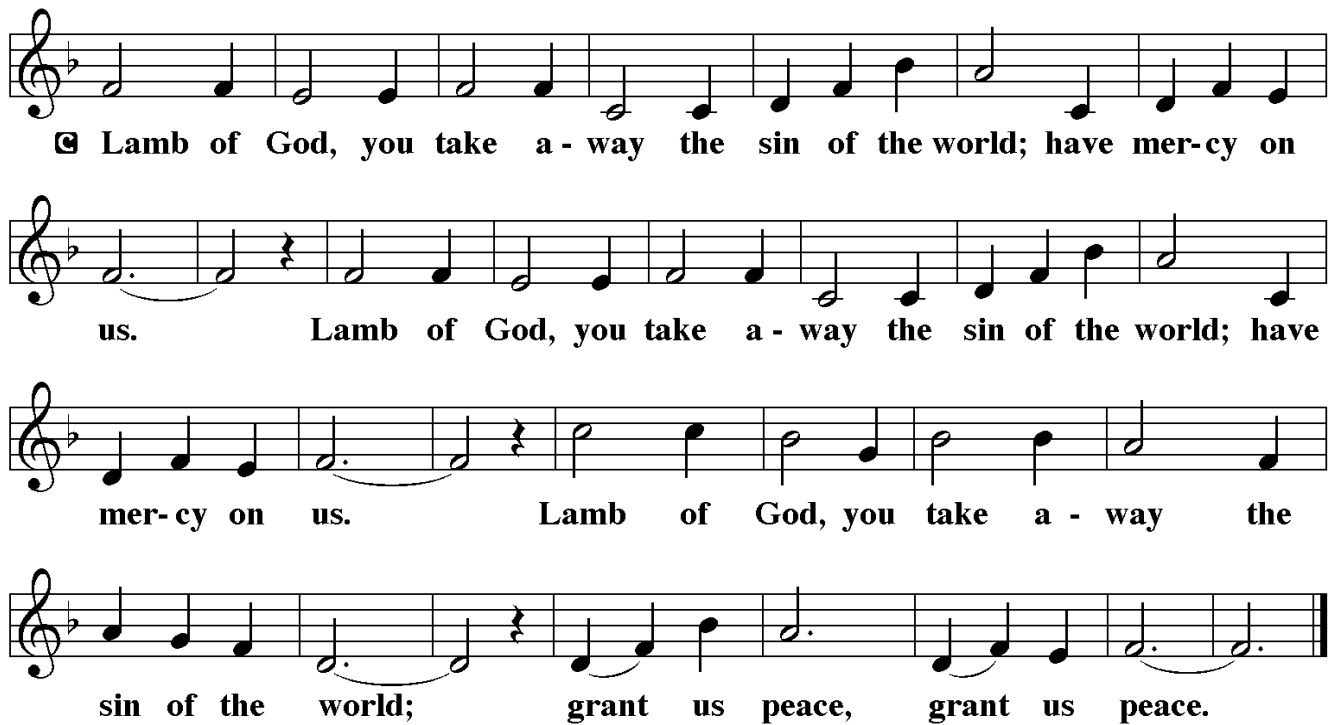
**Amen**

**\*LORD'S PRAYER (WOV p. 39)**

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

COMMUNION HYMN (WOV p. 39)



**C** 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 (WOV p. 39)

P The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
C Amen



COMMUNION HYMN *He Leadeth Me* (LBW 501)

He Leadeth Me

1 He lead-eth me: oh, bless-ed thought! Oh, words with heav'n-ly com-fort fraught!  
2 Some-times mid scenes of deep-est gloom, some-times where E - den's bow - ers bloom,  
3 Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ev - er mur - mur nor re - pine;  
4 And when my task on earth is done, when by thy grace the vic-t'ry's won,

What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.  
by wa - ters calm, o'er trou-bled sea, still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.  
con - tent, what-ev - er lot I see, since 'tis my God that lead - eth me.  
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee, since God through Jor - dan lead - eth me.

*Refrain*

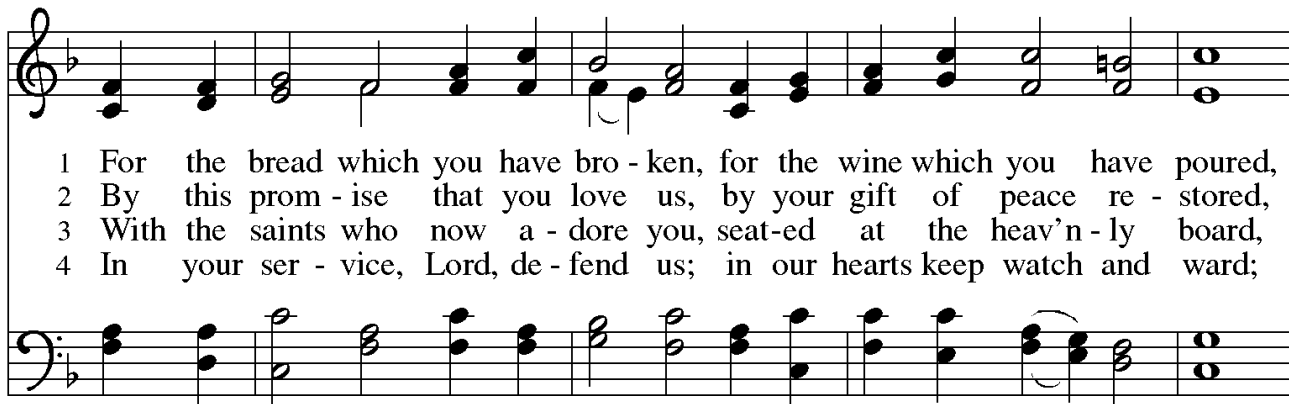
He lead-eth me, he lead-eth me, by his own hand he lead-eth me.

His faith-ful fol-l'wer I would be, for by his hand he lead - eth me.

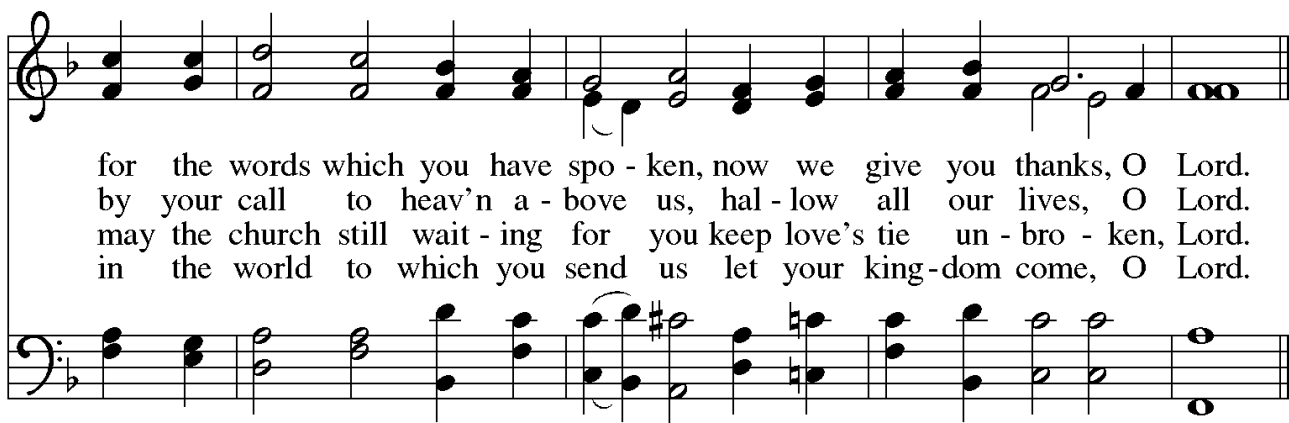
Text: Joseph H. Gilmore, 1834–1918  
Music: HE LEADETH ME, William B. Bradbury, 1815–1868

COMMUNION HYMN *For the Bread Which You Have Broken* (LBW 200)

For the Bread Which You Have Broken



1 For the bread which you have bro - ken, for the wine which you have poured,  
2 By this prom - ise that you love us, by your gift of peace re - stored,  
3 With the saints who now a - dore you, seat-ed at the heav'n - ly board,  
4 In your ser - vice, Lord, de - fend us; in our hearts keep watch and ward;



for the words which you have spo - ken, now we give you thanks, O Lord.  
by your call to heav'n a - bove us, hal - low all our lives, O Lord.  
may the church still wait - ing for you keep love's tie un - bro - ken, Lord.  
in the world to which you send us let your king - dom come, O Lord.

Text: Louis F. Benson, 1855–1930, alt.  
Music: OMNI DIE, *Gross Catolisch Gesangbuch*, Nürnberg, 1631; arr. William Smith Rockstro, 1823–1895  
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**\*POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE (WOV p. 40)**

**P** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C** Amen

**C** Thank - ful hearts and voic - es raise; tell ev - 'ry -  
one what God has done. Let all who seek the  
Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.  
Send us with your prom - is - es, O God, and  
lead us forth in joy with shouts of thanks -  
giv - ing. A - men, a - men.

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER (WOV p. 41)**

**P** Let us pray.

**P** Almighty God, you provide the true bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we who have received the Sacrament of his body and blood may abide in him and he in us, that we may be filled with the power of his endless life, now and forever.

**C** Amen



**\*BENEDICTION (WOV p. 41)**

P Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.  
C Amen

**\*DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
Amen

**REFLECTIONS**

1. What does the arrest of Peter and John [acts 4:5-12] make you think about today?
2. When it comes to the subject of 'The Resurrection of Jesus,' what was the difference between what the Pharisees believed compared to what the Sadducees believed?
3. The words 'Healed' and 'Saved' come from one root word. Have you ever thought of the two words having a connection?

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

P Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.  
C **Thanks be to God.**

**\*THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS\***

Welcome in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank you for coming!

**~ Strength & Healing Concerns~**

**\*PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS\***

Violet Haage	Pam Rabe	Pat Webb	Joan Pfahl
Judy Livingston	Pat Janssen	Lyle & Mary Lou Nannen	
Bill Juraco	Phyllis Fischer	Judy Wyss	Virginia Mahan
Pat Geltmaker	Jim Uphoff	Richard Sathoff	Rita Scott
Ray Hammerich	Cyndi Benson	Bill Riekema	Penny Nannen

Candy Davis – Sharon Benson's sister who has been told her cancer has returned.

Penny Nannen – had cancer surgically removed.

Mary Lou Nannen – who has been hospitalized.

**And All Soldiers Serving Our Country**

**~ THANK YOU ~**

**Pr. Raymond Barclay**

<b>MUSIC:</b>	<b>LINDA GARMON</b>
<b>READERS:</b>	<b>TRISH DEPPERMAN</b>
<b>GREETER:</b>	<b>GENTS'</b>
<b>COMM ASSTS:</b>	<b>ED SHAFER</b>
	<b>GARY ROSENBOHM</b>
	<b>ROSEMARY HAYNES</b>

~ ST. PETER HAPPENINGS ~

April 21<sup>st</sup> – Communion Sunday

April 22<sup>nd</sup> – 7pm WELCA Meeting + Silent Auction + Pound Sale

April 27<sup>th</sup> – Spring Clean-Up beginning at 8am

April 28<sup>th</sup> – Non-Communion Sunday

May 5<sup>th</sup> – Communion Sunday

May 8<sup>th</sup> – 9am Sewing

6pm Council Meeting

May 12<sup>th</sup> – Mother's Day

May 18<sup>th</sup> – 8am Men's Breakfast @ Glasford Baptist

May 19<sup>th</sup> – Communion Sunday

May 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> – Aletta will be out of the office – all bulletin info  
needs turned in to me by 9am Wednesday morning (5/22)

May 27<sup>th</sup> – Memorial Day!

**ATTENTION ALL LADIES**

Monday April 22nd at 7pm is our WELCA Silent Auction (Pound Sale) in the upper room. Come and have some fun with us. Just bring something that you'll put on the table and then see what you want to bid on to take home with you. You'll put your bid on a little piece of paper folded and underneath what you want and so will others. You won't know who gets the object until bidding stops and the committee looks through the bids and the highest bidder on each object wins. If there is a tie on something we open the bidding and auction it off between the 2 bidders. You can bring anything that you can dream up such as food, plants, decorations, etc. We've even had things in a brown paper sack and you're bidding an unknown object. It's really a fun event. If you want to be surrounded by friends and laugh a lot then give this a try.

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**April 21, 2024**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**Always Room for One More**

When Jesus says “I am” in the Gospel of John, he unlocks a new perspective on his love. In today’s reading, when Jesus declares, “I am the good shepherd,” we can imagine our Lord caring for us and guiding us. We picture ourselves as his sheep. It’s reassuring to hear that we aren’t alone to navigate the dangers and challenges of this world. We have a loving shepherd who is looking out for us.

Jesus loves us so much that he goes above and beyond the shepherd’s role as a caretaker. He gives up his own life so our sins can be forgiven and we can receive eternal life. That’s what being a good shepherd means—having such a close relationship with the sheep that the shepherd will stop at nothing to protect them. The shepherd will lay down his own life so his sheep can have life.

When we hear Jesus’ promise to be our good shepherd, we must not miss his commitment to gather up the sheep that aren’t yet part of his flock. They, too, will listen to Jesus’ voice. Responding to his loving call, they will become part of the one flock that follows Jesus as their good shepherd, their Savior, and their Lord. No matter how many sheep are already jostling for space, there is always room for one more. Just like there is always room at our holy communion table for one more person to eat the bread, drink the wine, and receive the gifts of God’s mercy and grace. We can always squeeze closer to the sheep around us to let one or more sheep enter Jesus’ flock, thankful that the flock is growing and that we get to listen to the loving voice of our good shepherd, together.

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