



CHRIST CHURCH DARTMOUTH

“A People United for Justice and Love”

Sunday Readings, Collects, and Prayers

September 2021 to January 2022

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Readings for September 5, 2021 to January 2022 (Liturgical Year B/C)

Season of Creation Resources taken from

https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Seasons_of_Creation_Devotional-Final_pages_-6.16.2020.pdf

<https://seasonofcreation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-SOC-Lectionary.pdf>

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1st Sunday of the Season of Creation: Environmental Justice & a Right to Water, September 5, 2021

Right to Water Sunday, based on Joint Anglican Church of Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada Joint Ecumenical Agreement

Readings: Genesis 1: 1-10; Psalm 69: 5-13; 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9; Matthew 25: 37-46

Collect

Creator of all,
stir in us the passion to share the living water
of the gospel as we also protect and share the waters
of your creation to nourish all creatures;
this we ask through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, now and always. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 1: 1-10

Right from the start, God's spirit hovered over the waters of creation. Water is the precursor of all life.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Psalm 69: 5-13

Water is not only one of God's first creations, but water is intrinsic to the cycle of life. The water cycle moves from land, to cloud, to rain, to field, to stream, to ocean. And through this cyclic sign of God's grace all creation is blessed.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.

You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,

the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain,

they shout and sing together for joy.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9

As we till the field and scatter the seed, we pray for a future harvest. Germination is God's province alone. Many hands are required in the production of our crops and food products but only God gives growth.

So, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the

one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Gospel: Matthew 25: 37-46

Food and drink are required of all living things. We have a responsibility to ensure there is enough for all. All have a right to live. All people have a right for the necessities of life.

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? 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?' 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.' 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; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 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.' 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?' 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.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Prayer over the Gifts

Spring of life and Source of goodness,
receive all we offer you this day,
and bring us to the living water,
Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of our pilgrimage,
we have found the living water.
Refresh and sustain us
as we go forth on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

2nd Sunday of the Season of Creation – Environmental Justice & Land Conservation, September 12, 2021

Readings: Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-17; Psalm 107: 33-43; Romans 5: 18-21; Luke 12:13-21

Collect

Creator, we pray that you would help us touch the earth gently. Turn us from our ways of commodifying the earth and consuming its riches without thought; this we ask through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 2: 4b-9, 15-17

In God's original intension for the creation of humanity, God placed us in an earthly garden. Out of the soil God created every living thing to live in balance. Sadly, the free will of humanity's greed entered into the equation.

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Psalm 107: 33-43

Humanity pollutes; God restores. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases but as always there are limits.

Rivers turn into desert, springs of water into thirsty ground,

a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

God turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.

There the hungry live and they establish a town to live in;

they sow fields, and plant vineyards, and get a fruitful yield.

By God's blessing they multiply greatly; God does not let their cattle decrease.

When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,

God pours contempt on rulers and makes them wander in trackless wastes;

but the needy are raised out of distress, and their families are like fruitful flocks.

The upright see it and are glad; and all wickedness stops its mouth.

Let those who are wise give heed to these things and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

Second Reading: Romans 5: 18-21

As Adam and Eve's disobedience led to the expulsion from the Garden, so too, Jesus' obedience led to the restoration and promise of life.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

The reason behind Adam's fall was ultimately greed. The reasons behind most pollution of our fragile planet, our island home, are expediency, quick profit, and greed. Jesus teaches us to beware of attachments to things.

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my

goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Prayer over the Gifts

Merciful God,
in Adam's fall we were born to death;
in the new Adam we are reborn to life.
Receive all we offer you this day
and may we share a taste of your eternal kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Almighty and eternal God,
may we who have received this eucharist
worship you in all we do,
and proclaim the glory of your majesty.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

3rd Sunday of the Season of Creation: Environmental Justice & Plant Conservation, September 19, 2021

Readings: Genesis 1: 9-12; Psalm 80:7-19; Romans 11:17-22; John 15:1-12

Collect

Liberating, life-giving God,
help us to know that we and the world
you have created are truly the work of your hands.
Give us knowledge and wisdom to care for your handiwork
now and for future generations; this we ask through Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, now and always. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 1: 9-12

As part of the initial creation, God delights in calling forth seaweeds, trees, plants, and vegetation of all kinds. Long before there were people; long before there were animals, there were plants. Plants therefore are the first living creatures of God, the first of God's children, and our elder brothers and sisters.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Psalm 80:7-19

The Psalmist compares the chosen people to a vine – called forth out of Egypt at the time of Exodus and rooted in the Promised Land. Though passing through times of struggle and suffering, the vine is always aware that it has life through God's graciousness.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.

The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches;

it sent out its branches to the sea, and its shoots to the river.

Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?

The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it.

Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted.

They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Second Reading: Romans 11:17-22

St Paul uses the image of an Olive Tree with many branches to describe the Church. We are all connected to the root which is the Love of God. So too are all plants, animals, and people -- all interconnected within creation as the generated life-filled expression of the love of God.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you. You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. So do not become proud; but stand in awe. For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness toward you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

Gospel: John 15:1-12

Jesus often used vegetation to speak of right relations with the Realm of God. Here Jesus says again that we are all interconnected as branches of the vine; where God is the root. The created plant order bears physical fruit – we are to bear the fruits of the Spirit of which the greatest is “Love.”

Jesus said “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
you have made our Saviour Jesus Christ
the head of all creation.
Receive all we offer you this day
and renew us in his risen life,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Loving God,
may we who have received this eucharist
live in the unity of your Holy Spirit,
that we may show forth his gifts to all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

4th Sunday of the Season of Creation: Environmental Justice & our relationship with other Animals, September 26, 2021

Readings Genesis 1:20-31; Psalm 104:14-24; Colossians 1:15-23a; John 21:4-14

Collect

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life
in all its diversity and beauty; renew us in
discipleship and in love for the earth,
this we ask through Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 1:20-31

We are all integrated into God's plan – plants, animals, birds of the air, fish of the sea, creatures on the land and flying over it, and people. And to humanity God has granted dominion, stewardship, guardianship, protection. What does that mean today?

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every

green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Psalm 104:14-24

The palmist reminds us that all of creation belongs to God and that everything and every thing is a gift from God.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth,

and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.

The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees.

The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney.

You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting.

You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.

The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.

People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:15-23a

Paul tells us that Christ is the head of all creation and that hope and reconciliation have been proclaimed to every living creature.

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to

have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him— provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven.

Gospel: John 21:4-14

Jesus and his disciples knew about fishing. Several were professional fishers. In today's gospel, set after the crucifixion, several disciples have returned to their profession of fishing. Gathered are Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James & John known as the sons of Zebedee, and two others. Although initially unsuccessful, after some direction from Jesus, they haul in a catch so large it could break their nets. This is clearly unsustainable fishing but is meant to show the abundance of God's love.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred metres off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy God, gracious and merciful,
you bring forth food from the earth
and nourish your whole creation.
Turn our hearts toward those
who hunger in any way,
so that all may know your care;
and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

Prayer After Communion

Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
The Episcopal Church, Book of Common Prayer

19th Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday October 3, 2021

Readings: Job 1:1, 2:1-10; Psalm 8; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Mark 10:2-16

Collect

God of the living law,
whose will is to protect the weak
and to educate our desires:
may we learn from you
to give each other dignity
and to find in you our unity;
through Jesus Christ,
who makes us one household. Amen.
Prayers for an Inclusive Church (2009) alt.

First Reading: Job 1:1, 2:1-10

This Sunday's excerpt, Job 1:1; 2:1-10, summarizes the folktale: Satan and God are conversing in heaven, a bet is placed, Job's wife is ridiculed. Some Christians have found in this story comfort, since it is the devil that brings about misfortune. Yet the setup of the tale raises obvious theological problems, which the later poet exposes. Many Christians have used the frame of the book of Job to preach patience in tribulation.

There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason." Then Satan answered the Lord, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die." But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Psalm 8

We respond to the first reading from Genesis, the story of the creation of humans, with Psalm 8, which is cited in the second reading from Hebrews. The psalm praises God for the creation of the universe, all the animals, and the especially glorious human species. Because Hebrew was an androcentric language, human beings were spoken of beginning in verse 4 as a single male, “man.” This led the author of Hebrews, and the early church, to interpret this “man” as Jesus Christ. Contemporary translators disagree about whether to retain the masculine singular or to render instead the species meaning of the word. In either case, the praise for the earth and its human beings is an appropriate response to the creation story in the first reading.

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12

The opening of this reading is also the second reading for Christmas Day. You will need a fine reader to proclaim this syntactically difficult reading, the first of seven semicontinuous selections from the letter to the Hebrews. More than humans, Jesus Christ is the truest heir of God and the reflection of divine glory. Yet we are brothers and sisters of the Son of God.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the Reflection: of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having

become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Over the centuries, some Christians have maintained an absolute refusal of divorce or have substituted annulments, which purport that a true marriage never existed, but over the last century many churches, more in keeping with Paul in 1 Corinthians, have come to condone divorce. In either case, the passage proclaims a countercultural belief that marriage partners have been bonded together by God and that Christians have a higher ethical standard than the law stipulates. The reciprocity in verses 11-12 indicates parallel situations of husband and wife. We are so accustomed to the passage about little children that we sometimes miss the shock of its countercultural assertion that God's kingdom belongs to its weakest members.

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of truth,
receive all we offer you this day.
Make us worthy servants,
Strong to follow in the pattern
Of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God,
May we who have been strengthened by the eucharist
remain in your steadfast love.
and show in our lives
the saving mystery that we celebrate.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving Sunday, October 10, 2021

Readings: Joel 2:21-27; Psalm 126; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Matthew 6:25-33

Collect

God of heaven and earth,
we sing of your bounty and your goodness
in the abundant harvest,
in the changing seasons,
and in the wonder of nature.
With generous hearts,
may we share what we have received
with those who have little,
so that none may hunger or thirst
and all may know your wide justice;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Joel 2:21-27

Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you, abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you.

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Psalm 126

Having heard Jeremiah's promise of a procession into the holy city, we join together in Psalm 126. The psalm recalls the joyous return of God's people to Zion, and yet continues to ask for more restoration of good fortune. Our gratitude for past favors is always present, our petition for current need is always present. For Christians, the church at worship is one manifestation of Zion.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all —this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Gospel: Matthew 6:25-33

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Prayer over the Gifts

Source of all life,
the heaven and earth are yours,
yet you have given us dominion over all things.
Receive the symbols of our labour and love
which we offer you this day,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of our hope,
in this eucharist we find the source of all your blessings.
Nourished in these holy mysteries
may we, with our lives,
give you continual thanks and praise.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

21st Sunday after Pentecost, October 17, 2021

Readings: Job 38:1-7; Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45

Collect

Suffering God,
when in whose name we seek glory for ourselves,
cast down all our idols
and direct our hearts
to him who bears our wounds
and is our peace,
Jesus Christ, the true God and servant of all. **Amen.**
Prayers for an Inclusive Church (2009) alt.

First Reading: Job 38:1-7;

For a general discussion of the Book of Job, see Lectionary 27. Today's excerpt is the beginning of God's response to Job's lament. The poet does not provide any divine answer to human suffering, but rather presents a four-chapter breathtaking description of the wonders of nature, both real and fantastic, the message being that God as creator is far beyond human questioning. Chapter 38 includes an alternate description of creation to those in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Especially in recent times Christians are mining the poetry of the theophany in Job in search of nature poetry, since this poet considers not only "nice nature" but also the natural patterns of life and death that are built into the created world. It is poignant that the poet of the Book of Job provides no resolution to the problem of theodicy.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?"

Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c

Having heard from Isaiah 53 about the suffering of the Servant, we respond by joining in Psalm 91:9-16, in which we beg God for protection from all evil. The prayer is marked by confidence that God will indeed guard us in all our ways. In the resurrection, Jesus too was rescued from "the lion and the serpent."

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty,

wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind,

you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.

You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken.

You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them.

You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Praise the LORD!

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:1-10

Jesus Christ, the source of eternal salvation, sacrificed himself for the people, and we follow him by living as servants of one another. Hebrews stresses not Jesus' victimization, but his authority as high priest and his willingness to suffer. We speak about this as the mystery of Christ.

Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

The cup we share and the baptism we undergo are signs of the death of Christ, whose glory is the cross. Yet our confidence in the victory of Christ leads us away from domineering attitudes and into lives of service.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
your word inspires our faith.
May we who offer you our praise
trust you in all things.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of peace,
you have nourished us in this sacrament
with the body and blood of Christ.
May we who have taken holy things
keep faith in our hearts and lives,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

22nd Sunday after Pentecost October 24, 2021

Readings: Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

Collect

Eternal God,
whose thoughts and ways are not ours,
you alone are God, holy and most high:
school us in the ways of faith and wisdom,
so that we, like Job,
may learn to see and hear truly,
and in humility find blessing.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Job 42:1-6, 10-17

For a general discussion of the book of Job, see Lectionary 27. In today's excerpt, Job silences his own complaints, and the old folktale somewhat incongruously concludes the book with everyone living happily ever after. Christians have cited the idea in verse 6 of repenting in dust and ashes on Ash Wednesday, and some Christians have taught that God does reward patient obedience, perhaps even with wealth and happiness. Yet other Christians have found it significant that this magnificent poetic book of the Bible offers no specific answer to the perennial question of the suffering of the innocent in light of the goodness of God.

Then Job answered the Lord: I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first *Jemimah*, the second *Keziah*, and the third *Keren-happuch*. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days.

Psalm 34:1-8

Having heard Jeremiah's promise of a procession into the holy city, we join together in Psalm 126. The psalm recalls the joyous return of God's people to Zion, and yet continues to ask for more restoration of good fortune. Our gratitude for past favors is always present, our petition for current need is always present. For Christians, the church at worship is one manifestation of Zion.

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.

This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble.

The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.

Second Reading: Hebrews 7:23-28

Demonstrating that all our metaphors are inadequate to describe the salvation of God, the author of Hebrews wrings a preferred metaphor dry and then reverses it: Jesus is high priest, Jesus is the lamb slain by the high priest. To approach the truth of Christ, we need at least two words. The church has taught that one meaning of the ascension is that now Christ is before the face of God, interceding for sinners. The prayer of Christians joins with the prayer of Jesus.

Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

Like Bartimaeus, we are all blind to the truth, unable to see Jesus as messiah unless our eyes are opened. But Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David, the teacher, has mercy on us and makes us into followers who can see in him the truth of God, and we follow him to his cross and resurrection.

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of constant love,
you have guided your people
in all times and ages.
May we who offer you our praise today
always be ready to follow where you lead;
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God our guide,
you have fed us with bread from heaven
as you fed the people of Israel.
May we who have been inwardly nourished
be ready to follow you all our days;
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All Saints & Heroes of the Reformation, October 31, 2021

Readings: Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9, Psalm 24; Revelation 21:1-6a; John 11:32-44

Collect

Source of all being, beginning and end,
we praise you for those
who have served you faithfully.
Replenish our hope in your eternal kingdom,
so that we may have life in all its fullness,
unbound by the fear of death;
through your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. In the time of their visitation, they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble.

They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

Psalm 24

Having heard Isaiah's vision of the final banquet, we respond by joining in Psalm 24, which describes the people as ascending onto the mountain of God because they have received righteousness from God. The poem's original use as a processional song welcoming the presence of God in the temple becomes for Christians praise to Christ, present among us at worship. The title "Lord of hosts" probably derives from praising YHWH as either the director of all the heavenly bodies or the commander of angelic or Israelite armies.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;

for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6a

The Revelation passage offers yet more metaphors for our hope in God's victory over death. Although we will indeed die, we trust in God's glorious end after our own end. The imagery stresses communal fulfillment—a new earth, a city, a marriage, a people—rather than an individualist understanding of salvation.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Gospel: John 11:32-44

Through the story of the raising of Lazarus, we experience Jesus accompanying us in our sorrow, and we believe that in Christ the power of death will be defeated. The synoptic gospels tell of two other resuscitation stories—the daughter of Jairus and the widow's only son—but true to form, John's story is

most detailed as a proclamation of the power of Christ over death. Christians can trust that the mercy of God will prevail over their own death and that of those they love.

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy and mighty God,
we give you thanks for the triumph of Christ
in the lives of all his saints.
Receive all we offer you this day,
and help us, like them, to run our course with faith,
that we may come to your eternal kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Lord of hosts,
we praise your glory reflected in your saints.
May we who share at this table
be filled with the joy of your eternal kingdom,
where Jesus is Lord, now and for ever. Amen.

The Sunday before Remembrance Day, November 7, 2021

Readings (All Soul's): Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 116: 1-8; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; John 6: 37-40

Collect

Abba,
we pray to you for those we love, but see no longer.
Grant them your peace,
let light perpetual shine upon them,
and in your loving wisdom and almighty power,
work in them the good purpose of your perfect will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 25:6-9

The Isaiah passage is chosen for today because its poetry provides another genre to parallel the narrative of the raising of Lazarus: the very shroud of Lazarus is cast off, and also Christ's tears are wiped away. At holy communion today, we join one another in God's feast for all the world.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Psalm 116: 1-8

Having heard the ancient poet call for divine vindication, we join together in Psalm 116:1-9, which includes several clear echoes of the passage from Isaiah. Now we have heard God's voice, we have been vindicated, and we praise God for saving us.

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I pray, save my life!”

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

The Lord protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1: 3-9

According to this heavily metaphoric post-baptismal sermon, we are now the exile community that in Christ is judged, ransomed, purified, and born anew. The word grows in us each week, and the blood of Christ buys us back from the power of death.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Gospel: John 6: 37-40

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

Prayer over the Gifts

Gracious and righteous Lord,
we are united in the love of Jesus Christ.
Accept all we offer you this day,
and bring us, with all your faithful people
who have gone before us,
into his eternal glory;
who is Lord, now and forever. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of love,
may the death and resurrection of Christ,
which we celebrate in this eucharist,
bring us, with the faithful departed,
into the peace of your eternal home.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our hope and salvation. **Amen.**

25th Sunday after Pentecost, November 14, 2021

Readings: Daniel 12:1-3; Psalm 16; Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25; Mark 13:1-8

Collect

Timeless One,
you create all moments of our lives,
giving each its meaning and its purpose.
Strengthen us to witness continually
to the love of Jesus Christ,
so that we may hold fast in times of trial,
even to the end of the ages. **Amen.**
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Daniel 12:1-3

This passage is tied to the Markan eschatology because it exemplifies the apocalyptic tradition in which Mark 13 participates. The Daniel excerpt clearly promises that God's life is more powerful than all instances of individual and communal suffering.

At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Psalm 16

Having heard Daniel's vision concerning the end of all things, we join together in Psalm 16. In this psalm, the worshiper is quite aware of approaching threats. Yet God is our portion, that is, the allotment that we—like the tribe of Levi—are granted, despite the fact that we inherited no land. There will be earthquakes, but we are next to God and will not be shaken. Verse 10 includes an early suggestion of the resurrection of the body. Verses 8 and 11 include the image of God's right hand.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.

For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy;

in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Second Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,” and since then has been waiting “until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.” For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Gospel: Mark 13:1-8

According to Jesus, the end is neither immediately upon us nor in the far distant future: more like labor pains, agonies recur throughout time, but God promises new birth and life on the other side of sorrow. For some Christian spiritualities, a literal interpretation of such passages remains significant. For others, such passages have continuous relevance, since we all face sorrow and death perpetually.

As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

Prayer over the Gifts

Holy God,
in this eucharist we renew our baptismal covenant.
Help us, through our offering this day,
to renounce all things that draw us from your love.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Gracious God,
in this sacrament
we have shared the body and blood of Christ.
May we who have been nourished by holy things
bear witness to his light,
and share in his eternal priesthood;
for he is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Reign of Christ Sunday, November 21, 2021

Readings: 2 Samuel 23:1-7; Psalm 132:1-12; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18:33-37

Collect

Almighty God,
train our eyes to discern your righteous rule,
so that, standing firmly in hope
before the powers of this world,
we may heed your voice
and be constant in your truth;
through Jesus of Nazareth, David's heir. **Amen.**
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 23:1-7

To conclude the semicontinuous first readings in year B, and to function as a bookend to Hannah's song from last week, a song described as the final words of King David is appointed. Traditional elements include metaphors comparing God to a rock, to a just monarch, and to the sun, as well as reference to the Davidic covenant. Familiar also is the Israelite worldview that God blesses the good but destroys the wicked in warfare and fire. Christians have used poems such as this to praise Jesus Christ, the genuinely just ruler and sun of righteousness. David's song can also function as a model for the deathbed speech of all of God's faithful people.

Now these are the last words of David: "The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man whom God exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel: The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue. The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: 'One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.'"

"Is not my house like this with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. Will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be picked up with the hand; to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear. And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot."

Psalm 132:1-12

Responding to the final song of David, we join in Psalm 132:1-12 [13-18], a royal psalm that celebrates the arrival of the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem. For Christians, the ambo from which we read the scriptures and the table at which we commune is our ark of the covenant. Christians see Jesus Christ as the son of David that the psalm anticipates.

O Lord, remember in David's favour all the hardships he endured;

how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, "I will not enter my house or get into my bed;

I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

We heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool."

Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.

Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy.

For your servant David's sake do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.

If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them,

their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne."

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8

The Revelation excerpt is laden with language that describes Christ. He is faithful to God's call; he died as a witness to his faith; he is the first recipient of the final resurrection; he, not the Roman emperor, is King of kings; his blood freed us from sin; his authority has made the community a kingdom of priests who serve God; he rules all things; he will come again with the clouds, that is, as the presence of God, who is God past, present, and future, the A and Z of the Greek alphabet, the beginning and ending of everything. The passage indicates that no one metaphor is sufficient in our descriptions of God, important to note on this festival on which one single image is celebrated.

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Gospel: John 18:33-37

Today the lectionary appoints a reading from John, since Mark's gospel does not elaborate on the metaphor of Christ as king. In this excerpt, Jesus is paradoxically a king since, rather than exert his own dominion over others, he testifies to the truth of God. The trial before Pilate is part of the way of the cross: the king will reign on the cross.

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Prayer over the Gifts

Eternal God,
by your grace you have raised us up
and enthroned us with Christ in the heavenly realms.
Receive all we offer you this day,
and lead us in those good works
for which you have created us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Almighty God,
you have made us a royal priesthood
in the kingdom of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Make known his victory through us, we pray,
that all the world may see his light.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Advent I, Sunday, November 28th, 2021

Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Collect

God of justice and peace,
from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness.
Raise our heads in expectation,
so that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord
and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**
Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The Jeremiah passage is chosen as a condensed form of the gospel: the Lord will come to restore justice among the people. It came to be that Christians called Jesus their Lord, the divinely-sent descendant of King David.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Psalm 25:1-10

Having heard Jeremiah's promise of a safe city, we join together in Psalm 25:1-10, a prayer of the believers' confidence in God's coming salvation. The psalm's emphasis on God's compassion, forgiveness, justice, and care for the lowly is an apt beginning for our year of Luke.

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

We pray with Paul that all our waiting for God be characterized by lives of gratitude, love, blamelessness. Such readying contrasts sharply with what our culture expects of us during the weeks of December.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Gospel: Luke 21:25-36

The reading calls us to join the Christians of the late first century, wishing for the end of all evil and sorrow and for the coming of the joyous reign of Christ. Christians believe that Christ has already come, is coming this morning in word and sacrament, and will come at the end of all things. Like a tree of life, the fig tree is already full of leaves.

There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

Then Jesus told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this

generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Prayer over the Gifts

God of love and power,
your word stirs within us
the expectation of the coming of your Son.
Accept all we offer you this day,
and sustain us with your promise of eternal life.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer After Communion

God for whom we wait,
you have fed us with the bread of eternal life.
Keep us ever watchful,
that we may be ready to stand before the Son of man.
We ask this in the name of Christ the Lord. Amen.

Advent II, December 5, 2021

Readings: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Collect

God of timeless grace,
you fill us with joyful expectation:
make us ready for the message that prepares the way,
so that with uprightness of heart and holy joy
we may eagerly await the coming of your Son,
Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Revised Common Lectionary Prayers (2002) alt.

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

The passage from Malachi is chosen as an example of the religious expectation that a messenger would urge the people to prepare for the messiah. Christians hear Malachi's messenger, like the voice of John the Baptist, speaking also to us, calling us to keep the covenant of our baptism and to purify our lives from sin.

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

Canticle: *The Song of Zechariah* Luke 1.68–79

In response to the call of Malachi, we join in one of Luke's canticles. Luke 1:68-79, the Song of Zechariah, adds Christian references that cite messianic promises (vv. 76-79) to a Jewish psalm-song that resembles the prayer that was appointed for circumcisions (vv. 68-75). The focus is not only on the infant boy, here taken to be the young John the Baptist, but encompasses the whole of Israel. For centuries, Christians who sing Morning Prayer have begun each day with this song of praise.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited, and redeemed his people;

And hath raised up a mighty salvation for us, in the house of his servant David;

As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets, which have been since the world began;

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us;

To perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

To perform the oath which he sware to our forefather Abraham, that he would grant us

That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve him without fear,

In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

To give knowledge of salvation unto his people/ for the remission of their sins;

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us;

To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-11

Paul's joy comes not from holiday preparation but through his faith in God's grace, compassion, and evidence of righteousness. As Paul awaits Christ's second coming, we join him by also meeting Christ in holy communion and anticipating the celebration of Christ's birth.

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

By listing authorities in the Roman Empire and in Jerusalem's temple staff, and by setting John the Baptist next to Isaiah near the Jordan, Luke presents a detailed setting for Jesus' adult life and ministry. Christ stands within human history, fulfilling in unexpected ways the religious expectations of his people. Also today, the body of Christ lives in the real world and shows to "all flesh" God's salvation. We are to reorder the world and build a royal triumphal highway for the coming of the Lord, in the present and the future.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

Prayer over the Gifts

God our strength,
we are nothing without you.
Receive all we offer you this day
as you sustain us with your mercy;
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Faithful God,
we thank you for feeding us with this heavenly banquet.
Help us always to hear the prophet's call
to turn our hearts to you;
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Advent III, December 12, 2021

Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Collect

God for whom we watch and wait,
you sent John the Baptist
to prepare the way of your Son:
give us courage to speak the truth,
to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right,
with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Common Worship: Additional Collects (2004)

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

The passage from Zephaniah broadens the way of Christ to include not only the judgment of which John the Baptist speaks but also the bliss of covenant love. Lutherans can say that it is as if Luke provides the “law” for this day and Zephaniah the “gospel.” For Christians, Christ is the King who gives victory and sings over the church with joy.

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

Canticle: *The Song of Thanksgiving* Isaiah 12.2–6

The Bible includes many psalm-like canticles, one of which is today’s response to Zephaniah. Isaiah 12:2-6 praises God as our salvation, strength, and might. For Christians, the “wells of salvation” recalls baptism. Similar to the passage from Zephaniah, this Isaiah song includes the hidden sexual imagery that God is in the midst of the city.

Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid.

For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defence, and he will be my Saviour.

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say, Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name;

make his deeds known among the peoples; see that they remember that his name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, and this is known in all the world.

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Perhaps Paul's blessing of peace is what many Christians need to hear during these pre-Christmas weeks, a peace that comes from being in Christ. The stress on joy in the third week of Advent led to the tradition of using a pink candle, rather than a purple one, on this third Sunday. In today's word and sacrament, we experience that the Lord is near.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: Luke 3:7-18

To ready ourselves for Christ, Luke calls us to repent, bear good fruit, share with the needy, be honest, and live in contentment. Soon the infant Christ will come with the Holy Spirit and fire. And this is (v. 18) "good news," especially to the poor and dispossessed. However, the contentment that Luke urges on the Christian community in the Roman Empire may strike some contemporary persons as anachronistic quietism. Yet charity and honesty are still bedrocks of Christian ethics.

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of hope,
renew in us the joy of your salvation
and make us a living sacrifice to you,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Merciful God,
may this eucharist free us from our sins,
fill us with unending joy,
and prepare us for the birthday of our Saviour.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
who is Lord now and for ever. **Amen.**

Advent IV, December 19, 2021

Readings: Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Collect

God of promise,
you look with favour on the lowly,
you scatter the proud and you fill the hungry.
May we, like Mary, respond to your call
and be obedient to your will;
through Jesus Christ who is to come. **Amen.**
FWM Proposed Prayers (2004) alt.

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a

The passage from Micah is set next to the Advent story of the visitation because of its references to a pregnant woman, to Bethlehem, and to the coming one who will rule “to the ends of the earth.” Christians see this hope of Micah fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

Therefore, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Canticle: *The Song of Mary* Luke 1:46b-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10

The Hebrews passage is set next to the Advent story of the visitation because of its emphasis on doing God's will. Throughout his infancy narratives, Luke stresses that Mary willingly accepted and embodied the will of God. In the Bible, to accept God's will is to live in grace; it is God's will for us to be saved. Only recently have some Christians equated God's will with a detailed personal plan for one's life. The author of Hebrews writes theology, not biography, when putting these words into Christ's mouth. This is one example of how formative for early Christian beliefs were the psalms.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)."

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

Mary, Elizabeth, and all the baptized have been filled with the Holy Spirit. God's promise comes especially to the downtrodden, the hungry, the lowly. We are thus called to stand with these people, as Elizabeth did, and be surprised to discover in them the presence of God.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of abundance,
we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation,
and with them our very lives.
Teach us patience and hope
as we care for all those in need
until the coming of your Son,
our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

Prayer After Communion

God for whom we wait,
in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day
when the hungry will be fed with good things.
Send us forth to make known your deeds
and to proclaim the greatness of your name,
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

Christmas Eve (Early service) December 24, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Collect

God of promise,
from ancient times you have sustained your people.
With Mary and Joseph,
teach us to treasure in our hearts the birth of Jesus,
and with shepherds and angels,
lead us to praise the holy Child of Bethlehem
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Revised Common Lectionary Prayers 2002 alt.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

That the angels in Luke name the child the Messiah, in Greek “Christ,” recalls oracles such as Isaiah 9, and Christians have seen in Jesus Christ the ancient promises of a coming king fulfilled. Jesus is “wonderful Counselor and mighty God” among us. Thus Christians hear in this oracle references to the triune God.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Psalm 96

Psalm 96 is one of the praise songs that names God as king and was perhaps used by the ancient Israelites to laud a king at his enthronement. In response to Isaiah 9 and its proclamation of the birth of the Mighty God, Christians sing Psalm 96 to praise Christ as our king. All the gods, all families of all peoples, the very earth, the sea and the fields all rejoice. Even as we go home to enjoy our Christmas trees, we know that “all the trees of the wood” have shouted in praise to Christ. Yet we remember the promises of Advent: he comes to judge the world.

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.

Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The Lord is king!

The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved.

He will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

As is often the case, the second reading indicates the implications of the gospel for the church: the appearance of God in Jesus Christ creates a people redeemed, purified, and dedicated to a life of good works. Christ among us changes our identity, our style of life, and the goal of our existence.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all,[a] training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior,[b] Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his

own who are zealous for good deeds.

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14-20

Luke 2, the only biblical narrative detailing the birth of Jesus, is proclaimed at the first eucharist of Christmas. In contrast to Matthew's interest in high status males, Luke emphasizes the opposite: a pregnant woman, "no place in the inn," and lower-class shepherds. Thanks in part to Luke's talent in storytelling, this narrative has become for many people synonymous with Christmas. The challenge at this service is to proclaim the truth of this narrative as other than and far beyond stereotypical sentimentality.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Prayer over the Gifts

Good and loving God,
we rejoice in the birth of Jesus,
who came among the poor
to bring the riches of your grace.
As you have blessed us with your gifts,
let them be a blessing for others.

With the trees of the field,
with all earth and heaven,
we should for joy at the coming of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

Prayer After Communion

Radiant God,
with our eyes we have seen your salvation,
and in this meal we have feasted on your grace.
May your Word take flesh in us,
so that we may be your holy people,
revealing your glory made known to us
in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

Christmas Eve (Late service) December 24, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

Collect

Eternal God,
this holy night is radiant
with the brilliance of your one true light.
As we have known
the revelation of that light on earth,
bring us to see the splendour of your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 62:6-12

For Christians, Christ is himself the city Jerusalem. In Christ the people become holy and are sought out and redeemed. Coming to church on Christmas Day is like parading through the gates of the restored city.

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have labored; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.

Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples. The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, "See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." They shall be called, "The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord"; and you shall be called, "Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken."

Psalm 97

At the three Christmas services, we sing out three of the enthronement psalms. The psalm for the service at dawn is Psalm 97. In response to the joy of Isaiah 62 at the coming of God into the city, Christians sing a poem that calls for all the nature and the whole human society to praise Christ. In the words of this psalm, "Light dawns for the righteous" (v. 11) at this early morning celebration of Christmas.

The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!

Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Fire goes before him and consumes his adversaries on every side.

His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.

The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth.

The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory.

All worshipers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him.

Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O God.

For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

The Lord loves those who hate evil; he guards the lives of his faithful; he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

Second Reading: Titus 3:4-7

The reading proclaims, not baby Jesus, but the triune God: God in Christ has given us the Holy Spirit. The fruits of Christmas come to us in baptism. Christ is God born among us.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

The activity of the shepherds—coming to Christ, telling others, praising God—is a model for the life of Christians during the day. We are the shepherds, spending our day filled with the Spirit of Christ and spreading the good news of salvation to others.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Prayer over the Gifts

Source of light and gladness,
accept all we offer on this joyful feast.
May we grow up in him who unites our lives to yours;
for he is Lord now and for ever. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of all,
tonight you have united earth and heaven
in sending your Son to take our human nature.
May we who have tasted heavenly things
share in the life of his eternal kingdom.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Christmas Day (Optional), December 25, 2021

Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12); John 1:1-14

Collect

Almighty God,
you wonderfully created
and yet more wonderfully restored our human nature.
May we share the divine life of your Son Jesus Christ,
who humbled himself to share our humanity,
and now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

Christians see in this passage from Second Isaiah, which directly precedes the Suffering Servant poem appointed for Good Friday, a way to speak about Jesus, whose birth near Jerusalem embodied the reign of God and brought salvation to the world.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Psalm 98

The third of the enthronement psalms that Christians sing at Christmas is Psalm 98. Isaiah 52 has proclaimed, “Break forth together into singing,” and we do, singing “a new song of the Lord.” Christ has brought us victory. All lands, trumpets and horns, even rivers and hills are applauding the birth of Christ. Anticipating John 1, we speak of Christ as the holy arm of God.

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy

at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4

The beautifully written introduction to Hebrews offers worshipers yet more profound language with which to picture the meaning of Jesus Christ. The Son of God, he was with God at the creation of the world; on earth he was the powerful divine word; and now he reigns with God over all things. At Christmas we praise Christ, not only an infant, but indeed the very God.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the Reflection: of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Gospel: John 1:1-14

Especially John's gospel guided the church into the mystery of the incarnation: the Jesus whose birth the church celebrates at Christmas is the Word of God, indeed God in the flesh. On Christmas Day the church moves from the beloved narrative of Bethlehem to the central conviction of the Christian faith, that Jesus is God from before the creation of the world. Christmas celebrates God alive in glory and active among humankind. The lectionary appoints Genesis 1, "In the beginning," at Easter, and John 1, "In the beginning," at Christmas.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him

not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of peace,
your Son Jesus Christ has reconciled us to you.
May all we offer you today
renew us as members of your household.
We ask this in his name. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Father of all,
the child born for us is the Saviour of the world.
May he who made us your children
welcome us into your kingdom,
where he is alive and reigns with you now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Sunday after Christmas Day, December 26, 2021

Readings: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Collect

Shine into our hearts
the light of your wisdom, O God,
and open our minds to the knowledge of your word,
so that in all things we may think and act
according to your good will
and may live continually in the light
of your Son Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.
Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) alt.

First Reading: 1 Samuel 2:18-20

The narrative about Samuel is set parallel to that of Jesus in the temple because also Samuel, whose conception required divine intervention, is given to the service of God and speaks the word of God. Verse 26 parallels Luke 2:52. The boy is clothed in an alb-like robe that signifies his ministry in the temple.

Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord”; and then they would return to their home.

Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.

Psalm 148

Each year the psalm for the first Sunday of Christmas is Psalm 148. In this exuberant song, all of God’s creation joins us to praise the name of the Lord. For Christians, Jesus bears the name of the Lord. One of God’s “faithful servants” is the boy Samuel.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and women alike; old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his glory is above earth and heaven.

He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the Lord!

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

We too are found in the Father's house; we too wear the white robe of baptism. Like Samuel, Mary, and the boy Jesus, we hold the word of God in our hearts. The peace of Christ rules. Our name, that is, the authority under which we present ourselves to the world, is the Lord Jesus. Our habit—that is, both our standard clothing and our practice of life—is thanksgiving.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Today we join Mary and Joseph to find Jesus in his Father's house. He both participates in and moves beyond familial expectations and Jewish religious practice. Like Mary, we treasure these truths in our hearts.

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of light,
in the birth of your Son we see your glory.
May we who share in this mystery
grow daily in your love.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Source of truth and joy,
may we who have received the gift of divine life
always follow the way of your Son.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Second Sunday following Christmas & the Sunday before the Epiphany of the Lord, January 2, 2022

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

Collect

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
so that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Common Worship: Additional Collects 2004 alt.

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

The lectionary appoints this poem from Isaiah because it served as a backdrop for Matthew as he wrote of the meaning of the birth of Jesus. The light becomes for Matthew the star, and the gold and frankincense are gifts that the magi present. Thus for Matthew the gifts of the magi affirm that Christ is the light that the poem from Isaiah described.

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense; and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Epiphany is an example of a Christian festival that owes a great deal to its traditional psalm. The first reading speaks of God's light shining throughout the earth and of travelers coming from far with gifts of gold and frankincense, and we respond by singing Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14. This is a royal psalm, asking God to bless the Israelite king, and Christians see in its imagery a description of Christ who comes to reign over all. This psalm speaks of kings from three cities who bring their gifts, and the use of this psalm at Epiphany has turned the unnumbered magi of Matthew 2 into "the three kings" of Christian calendar, art, hymnody, and pageants.

Readings for September 5, 2021 to January 2022 (Liturgical Year B/C)

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy; and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:1-12

The reading is appropriate for Epiphany because it speaks of the revelation of the mystery of Christ. The magi saw the light, and now believers also see the wisdom of God revealed in the life of Christ. We celebrate that light in our worship, and we see Christ in the scriptures, in the bread and wine, and in one another.

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

This reading proclaims that even as a young child, Jesus is recognized as a king of the Jews who has significance for the entire globe. Even the sky shows new light. Not only Jews, but also people from other religions see God's light in Jesus. Christians have seen their gifts to the poor and to the church as like the gifts of the magi. Herod's threat is a down payment on the cross.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Prayer over the Gifts

Gracious God,
accept the offering of your Church,
the hearts of your people
joined in praise and thanksgiving,
in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

God of all the nations of the earth,
guide us with your light.
Help us to recognize Christ as he comes to us
in this eucharist and in our neighbours.
May we welcome him with love,
for he is Lord now and for ever. **Amen.**

1st Sunday after the Epiphany the Baptism of the Lord, January 9, 2022

Readings: Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Collect

Heavenly Father,
at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:
may we recognize him as our Lord
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**
Common Worship: Additional Collects (2004)

First Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

The poem from Second Isaiah is chosen because of its imagery of water, its proclamation of the love of God, its familial language, and the reference to being called by God's name. In baptism, we are washed, we receive God's love, we become sons and daughters, and we are called by the name of Christ. These ideas are echoed in Luke's account of Jesus' baptism.

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Psalm 29

We respond to the Genesis creation story by singing Psalm 29, which praises the Lord, that is YHWH, with phrases that appear to have been adapted by the Israelites from the worship of the Canaanite weather deity Baal. The psalm moves from a god of the storm to a God who blesses the people with peace.

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Second Reading: Acts 8:14-17

Although Christians have not agreed about the scheduling of baptism in the life of the Christian, all speak of the water as including a proclamation of the word and as conferring the Holy Spirit, that is, the very presence of God, onto the candidate. The practice at baptism of naming the infant or of conferring a baptismal name developed from the idea that at baptism the candidate has been named a Christian.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Gospel: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

At the beginning of the year we commemorate both Jesus' baptism and our own. The images of the Holy Spirit as fire and as dove balance each other, and both illumine the meaning of baptism. This gospel is yet another Trinity Sunday, summing up the Christmas cycle, calling us into life with the triune God.

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I

am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Prayer over the Gifts

God of life and freedom,
we celebrate the revelation of Jesus
as the Christ who makes all creation new.
Accept all we offer you this day
and make us new in him,
who is Lord for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer After Communion

Gracious God, lover of all,
by this sacrament
you make us one family in Christ your Son,
one in the sharing of his body and blood,
one in the communion of his Spirit.
Help us to grow in love for one another
and come to the full maturity of the Body of Christ.
We ask this in his name. **Amen.**