



**Destroy this temple,
and in three days
I will raise it up.**

John 2:19

**March 7, 2021
Third Sunday in Lent
9:30 AM Worship**

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. – P.O. Box 218
Washburn, North Dakota 58577
www.flcwashburn.com

PRELUDE AND BELLS

AS WE GATHER

(The Church has what the world doesn't want: God's Law, which always accuses us sinners, and His Gospel, which allows for no boasting on our part. To this day, Jewish leaders teach that God will not demand what we cannot achieve. What a stumbling block, preaching a Messiah who becomes a sacrifice for our failings, both in our actions and our very nature. The polytheistic society of Paul's day and the secular one of ours both find the Law an encumbrance, preferring to judge by their own standards (or lack of them). What folly, our society believes, to preach a God who chooses people whom everyone knows to be weak. Today is a day for foolish preaching: Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God.)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: We are gathered together for worship in the name of the one God: Father, and of the Son, + and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: In this season of Lent, let us draw near to the Lord and examine our hearts and minds for the ways in which we have fallen short of the glory of God.

(Silence for self-reflection and examination)

P: Holy God,

C: You sent your Son, Jesus, into the world to save us from the power of sin, death, and the devil. We confess that we have failed in many ways to follow him in our lives. We have forsaken the poor and hungry, we have neglected the sick and sorrowful, and we have looked out for our own needs rather than the needs of others. Forgive us, we pray, and restore us to a new and right relationship with you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P: The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone; all those who believe in Christ are living stones in his holy house. Hear his Word of forgiveness and be comforted by his love. You are made new again by the blood of Christ who gave himself for us so that we might be holy and precious in his sight. (Luke 20:17)

C: Amen.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who saves us through faith, the love of the Father who gifts us with every good gift, and the communion of the Holy Spirit who fills us with all wisdom, be with you all.

C: And also with you.

HYMN On back page
"Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed"

KYRIE

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

C: And also with you.

A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. B Lord, have mer - cy.

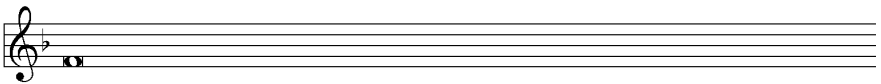
A For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

B Lord, have mer - cy.

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

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

B Lord, have mer - cy.



Ⓐ For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

Ⓒ Lord, have mer - cy.



Ⓐ Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. Ⓒ A - men

SALUTATION



Ⓒ The Lord be with you.

Ⓒ And al - so with you.

P: Let us pray:

C: Holy Father, you made it clear to your chosen people that you are the one true God who is worthy of our worship. Grant us grace and boldness to cast aside all pursuits that can so easily become our idols and keep us faithful in our worship of you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING Exodus 20:1-17
(The Ten Commandments contain both law and mercy. There are not just commandments but also precious promises in the Decalogue. His steadfast love is secure for those who love him and keep his statutes.)

¹God spoke all these words, saying, ²"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.³You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and

keep my commandments. ⁷You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. ⁸Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹²Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³You shall not murder. ¹⁴You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵You shall not steal. ¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

PSALM (Read responsively)Psalm 19
(Notice how God redeems his people throughout the Scripture. The perfect law of the Lord directed the people of old to the Lord and to the sacrifices prescribed for their errors. Though "in many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets ... in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1). God is still redeeming — eternally.)

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

**² Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.**

³ There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.

**⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.**

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

**⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

- ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
- ⁸ **the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;**
- ⁹ the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰ **More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.**
- ¹¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹² **Who can discern his errors?
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**
- ¹³ Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.
- ¹⁴ **Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my
heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
("I will pull myself up by my bootstraps," some proclaim. "I am self-reliant!" Others insist that there is no hope at all, even in themselves. Both of these attitudes would insist that the cross is the folly of fools. They can put no stock in a Savior, particularly one who cannot even save himself from the cross. But for those who trust in Christ, the cross is the agency of salvation. We boast in the folly of what we preach, for we preach Christ and him crucified (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2).)

¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the

discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

SPECIAL MUSIC Bell Choir
 “This Is My Father’s World”

RETURN TO THE LORD

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and
 mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in
 stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 2nd chapter.



GOSPEL READINGJohn 2:13-25
(Oh! What an assertion — however it was received, as the temple or as Jesus' body — that Jesus would raise what was destroyed, and in only three days' time. It took 46 years to build that temple, they insisted. But what would be the more difficult achievement: to rebuild a temple of stone or to raise oneself from the dead? In hindsight, his disciples would come to understand. May we, by the grace of God, believe.)

¹³The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. ²³Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.



TRUST, GUIDANCE

482 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross On which the
 2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the
 3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sor - row and
 4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, That were a

prince of glo - ry died, My rich - est gain I
 death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that
 love flow min - gled down. Did e'er such love and
 trib - ute far too small; Love so a - maz - ing,

count but loss And pour con - tempt on all my pride.
 charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood.
 sor - row meet, Or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?
 so di - vine, De - mands my soul, my life, my all!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
Tune: adapt. Edward Miller, 1731-1807

ROCKINGHAM OLD
L M

APOSTLES' CREED

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

Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

SHARING OF THE PEACE

(Place your hand over your heart and turn to your neighbor sharing the peace in this manner. No hand shaking.)

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

C: And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER (Said in unison)

God of love, you have provided for our every need from your abundant bounty. Grant us grateful hearts that we may give generously to those in need and thereby show your love to the world around us. Amen.

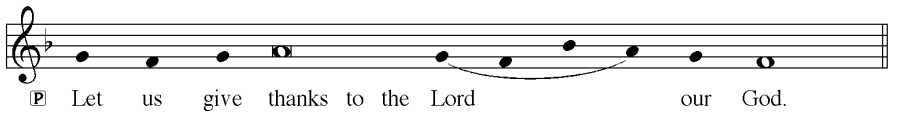
THE GREAT THANKSGIVING



Ⓟ The Lord be with you. ☩ And al - so with you.



Ⓟ Lift up your hearts. ☩ We lift them to the Lord.

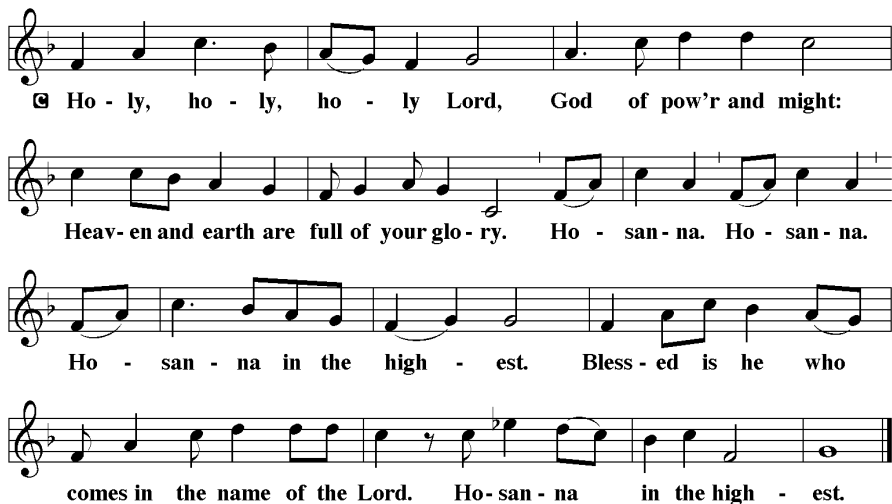


Ⓟ Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



☩ It is right to give him thanks and praise.

P: It is truly good, right, and salutary...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:
Heav- en and earth are full of your glo- ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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

LORD'S PRAYER

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

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

(Single Aisle Station – one side at a time, social distancing)

SPECIAL MUSICOrlin Larson, Brent & Theresa Petersen
"I Wonder Why"

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

C: Amen

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)

Go now, in the name of God the Father, the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

BENEDICTION *Psalm 32:10*

P: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✕ give you peace
Numbers 6:24–26

In the name of the Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

HYMN **On next page**
“Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

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Today’s Worship Leaders & Volunteers – Thank You!

- PASTOR Pastor Chuck Mann
- ACOLYTE Carter Knutson
- COMMUNION ASSISTANT Randy Hanson
- READER Randy Hanson
- ORGANIST LeAnn Richard
- USHERS/GREETERS Jordan Swanson & George Swanson
- ALTAR GUILD Janet Hanson & Theresa Petersen
- SERVICE GROUP COORDINATORS Rick & LeAnn Richard

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

327

1 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in thee;
2 Not the la - bors of my hands Can ful - fill thy law's de - mands;
3 Noth - ing in my hand I bring; Sim - ply to thy cross I cling.
4 While I draw this fleet - ing breath, When mine eye - lids close in death,

Let the wa - ter and the blood, From thy riv - en side which flowed,
Could my zeal no res - pite know, Could my tears for - ev - er flow,
Na - ked, come to thee for dress; Help - less, look to thee for grace;
When I soar to worlds un - known, See thee on thy judg - ment throne,

Be of sin the dou - ble cure: Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.
All for sin could not a - tone; Thou must save, and thou a - lone.
Foul, I to the foun - tain fly; Wash me, Sav - ior, or I die.
Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in thee.

Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740-1778
Tune: Thomas Hastings, 1784-1872

TOPLADY
77 77 77

Our Mission

“Working hand in hand to know Christ and make Christ known through Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, Fellowship, Caring Ministries, and Service.”

Welcome to all who have come to worship.

Welcome to worship, whether in person or online! May zeal for God's house consume us, as it did Jesus (John 2:17), but remember that the Holy Spirit lives in every human heart.

Visitors

We welcome all visitors to First Lutheran today.

Holy Communion

All are welcome to receive the Lord's Body and Blood who are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and believe that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is truly present in, with and under the forms of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Receive the bread into your open, flat palm. Ask if you wish to receive grape juice or a gluten free wafer. Alert an usher if you, or someone you know, needs communion served in the pew.

Nursery

The nursery, located beside the narthex, is available for use for any parent feeling the need to use it during worship services with their child.

Thank you for your giving

Wednesday, February 24th, Attendance – 82

Facebook Online Viewing – 87

General Fund & Plate Giving - \$922.00

Sunday, February 28th, Attendance – 116

Facebook Online Viewing - 140

General Fund & Plate Giving - \$5,680.00

Don't forget to turn your clock ahead one hour before going to bed Saturday night or you may be late for church next Sunday.

Pastoral Care

Please call Pastor Chuck if you or a loved one are in the hospital or know you will be going to the hospital. The church does not usually get informed of your stay by any of the hospitals even if you are registered under our congregation's name. We want to make sure you get pastoral care. Thank you!

Sympathy

Our sympathy goes out to Kathy Farstad and family on the death of Kathy's brother, Jerry Molter. Jerry's memorial service was this past Thursday in MN. May God give them comfort in this time of sorrow.

Prayer Requests

Family of Jerry Molter on his death, Mary Ann Monsebroten – Sister to Jackie Olson, Weldon Wagner – Brother to Arden Wagner, Cindy Thiel, George Sheldon, Jason Sauer – Son of Wes Sauer, Haley Beaudry – Brother to Mac Beaudry, Kathy Solomonson, Mary Ann Beeks, Josiah Johnson – Brother to Steph Mann, Greg Merrill – Uncle to Steph Mann, Wayne & Cindy Vorland – Parents of Aaron Vorland, Shauntaye & Oaklynn Kopecky – Kurlle family member, Mary Schulz, Ross Lorentzen, Gwen DeMontigny, Kayla Boger – Family member of Steve & Peggy Wollmuth, Keith Hammerbeck – Family friend of the Kugler's, Deborah Davenport – Mother of Laura Gardner's friend, Virgie Emineth, Cindy Delmonico – Mother to Melissa Kugler, Glenn Weist, Ruby from Pine Ridge, Claire Boucher – Friends of Aaron & Lexie Solomonson newborn, Jamie Baumann, James Tolbert, Brad Taylor – Friend of Pastor Chuck, Taylor Gardner, Harold Holtz, Elaine Renfrow – Mother to Lynette Sondrol, Sandi Femling – Cousin to Melanie Beckman, Laren Holznagel, Harlow Tatum – Daughter to Brea (Gutknecht) Tatum, Melisa Chrest, Ruth Lund – Mother to Doddie Kuntz, Derek Laning, John Krebsbach – Brother to Peggy Wollmuth, Arlo Omoth – Brother to Jeneen Loe, Bob Miller, Rodney Jaeger

First Communion

First Communion class starts tonight, March 7th at 7:00 pm.

Church Council

Church council will meet this Tuesday, March 9th, at 7:00 pm.

Men, Women, Teenagers Needed

Looking for men, women and teenagers to be part of the Lenten Drama series on Wednesday nights! Save Pastor Chuck the headache of finding people and volunteer yourself now by talking to Pastor Chuck. Don't make us go looking for you!

Lenten Meals & Worship

Join us this Wednesday, March 10th for our Lenten meal. The Stewardship Committee will be serving Sloppy Joes and Nachos from 5:30 – 6:45 pm. Free-will offering. Money will be used for the stewardship budget. Join us after the meal for our Lenten Worship drama series, “How to be a Disciple: The Reflections of a Contemporary Twelve” at 7:00 pm with James and John “On the family of Christ”. Themes are: Family, rivalry, unconditional love.

Looking for Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers for the following:

1. Preschool VBS director needed. You would be provided with curriculum and volunteers. We just need someone to organize the details. Probable dates and times are June 1-4 from 9:00-10:30.
2. Preschool VBS volunteers. This program is during the work day, so if you are available to help please let us know!
3. Elementary VBS. I am sad to report that Camp of the Cross will not be coming to do VBS this year. That means we will need to step up if we would like to provide a VBS program for our kids. We will need music people, craft people, game people and more. Please contact me if you would be interested in hopping on board! Probable dates are June 1-4 from 6:00-8:30. Thanks in advance! Stacy Boeshans 701-240-8012
4. People to serve on the Endowment Committee. If interested please talk to Matt Gardner.
5. Anyone interested in serving on the Evangelism Committee. If interested contact Melanie Beckman.

Food Drive

The “Kindness Class” at Washburn School is asking First Lutheran members to help them with a food drive. Would you please bring canned goods to church on Sunday, March 14th? The students will be here to collect and take to our Food Pantry. This is a class project and your donations will be appreciated. Thank you in advance.

LBW & WOV Hymnals

We will be ordering more LBW (green) and WOV (blue) hymnals. As of the printing of this bulletin the total number is not known but should be known by this church service. Cost is \$29.50 per LBW and \$14.50 per WOV plus tax and shipping. If you would like to help purchase any of these hymnals please talk to Jeannette in the church office.

Our Daily Bread

The March/April/May edition of *Our Daily Bread* is in the magazine racks in the narthex. Pick up a copy today to use with your daily devotions.

Kitchen Items

Kitchen items that have not been claimed are on a table in the narthex for free unless you would like to make a free-will donation to FLCW. Items remaining after March 17th will be given to the McLean County Resource Center.

Missing

A Super Valu bag in a box with a string of red lights and a 6" star is missing. It was put in the narthex about a month ago and is now gone. It did not make it to the person it was to go to. If you took the box or know where it is, please bring it back and let Jeannette know in the church office so it can get to the rightful person. No questions asked!

Thank You

THANKS to the FLC Church Council, FLCW, Evangelism Committee, Men's Bible Study group, and an anonymous party, all registration fees will be covered for FLC campers to Camp of the Cross Ministries this summer. There is an early bird discount for registering with CCM by April 1, 2021. Please let Peggy Moran know by May 24, 2021, if you have campers registered so the funds can be sent to the camp before the camp season begins.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent members that have Thrivent Choice Dollars to direct to an organization, you have until March 31st to do that before you lose last year's dollars.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

- ⇒ **Class:** We are looking at how many would be interested in a class to be scheduled in the future in learning how to knit or crochet. Please contact Jeannette and specify which you would like to learn and stay tuned for time/date TBA.
- ⇒ **Distribution of Shawls:** There will be a sheet located on top of the prayer shawl box. It will have a place for the *name of the person taking the shawl, number of shawls being taken and the recipient*. You do not need to fill out all of it, please at least fill out the number so we know how many shawls we have been able to provide. If you would like us to add the recipient to the prayer chain, please include the name.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST LUTHERAN

TODAY	8:30 AM	Bible Study Led by Cathy Sheldon
	9:30 AM	Worship w/Holy Communion
	10:45 AM	Sunday School Bible Study Led by Alexis Solomonson
	7:00 PM	First Communion Class
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting Al-Anon Meeting
	MON.	10:00 AM
TUES.	8:00 AM	Men's Bible Study
	10:00 AM	Mommy's Group
	7:00 PM	Council Meeting
WED.	9:30 AM	Friendship Bible Study
	5:30 – 6:45 PM	Lenten Meal Served by Stewardship Committee
	6:15 PM	Bell Choir
	7:00 PM	Lenten Worship Service
	7:45 PM	FLY
	7:45 PM	Choir
SAT.	6:00 PM	Marriage Course
SUNDAY	8:30 AM	Bible Study Led by Cathy Sheldon
	9:30 AM	Worship
	10:45 AM	Sunday School Bible Study Led by Alexis Solomonson
	7:00 PM	First Communion Class
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting
	7:00 PM	Al-Anon Meeting

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

March 7, 2021 – Third Sunday in Lent

*“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery...” – Exodus 20:1-3*

God gave Moses specific instructions on what to say to the people before giving them the Ten Commandments. Listen to the words: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” (Exodus 19:4) Why would God say that? The Israelites who heard these words knew why. The memory was still fresh in their minds. God was saying, “Do you remember when you were trapped in Egypt and there was no escape from bondage? How you groaned under the cruelty of your taskmasters? I came down to buy you back out of slavery. Remember standing on the shore with the sea at your feet and Pharaoh’s troops breathing down your back? Feeling stuck because you couldn’t move forward and you couldn’t go back? I made a way for you when there was no way. Remember how in the wilderness I fed you with manna? Remember how I swooped down and bore you up on eagles’ wings? Remember?”

See, the rightful setting for the commandments is God’s boundless, faithful, fatherly love. Love doesn’t always come wrapped up like a pretty gift. It doesn’t always show up on your doorstep in the form of beautiful flowers. In fact, it just might be written in stone.

So how should we respond to such a gift? Before God gave the Ten Commandments, he told Moses to prepare the Israelites for his visit. They were to sanctify themselves and wash their clothes. When God comes down to visit you, it will require something of you. Something like reverence and expectancy, humility and awe. How might you and I prepare ourselves for whatever it is that God might like to give us or say to us?

We need to make room in our hearts and minds, we need to lose the clutter that prevents us from hearing God speak. Clutter like worry, and riches, and endless busyness that robs us of rest and peace. See, sin in our lives doesn’t stop God from giving, it just stops you and me from receiving.

Moses pleaded his case for the Israelites on the mountain, and God sent his first love letter written in stone. Today we come before Jesus Christ and he pleads for us before the Father’s throne. His love letter would be written in the blood of the Lamb. Let us prepare to receive his love in Word and Sacrament that we may be set free from all that holds us bound. Amen.

Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

1 A - las! And did my Sav - ior bleed, And did my sov - 'reign die?
 2 Was it for sins that I had done He groaned up - on the tree?
 3 Well might the sun in dark - ness hide And shut its glo - ries in
 4 Thus might I hide my blush - ing face While his dear cross ap - pears,

Would he de - vote that sa - cred head For sin - ners such as I?
 A - maz - ing pit - y, grace un - known, And love be - yond de - gree!
 When God, the might - y mak - er, died For his own crea - tures' sin.
 Dis - solve my heart in thank - ful - ness, And melt my eyes to tears.

- 5 But tears of grief cannot repay
 The debt of love I owe;
 Here, Lord, I give myself away:
 It's all that I can do.