

Rest a while.

Mark 6:31



July 21, 2024
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
9:30 AM Worship

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. – P.O. Box 218
Washburn, North Dakota 58577
www.flcwashburn.com
701-462-3775

PRELUDE AND BELLS

AS WE GATHER

(God's Old Testament people sinned against God and ended up far from home, exiled in Babylon. Yet, God's mercy did not fail, just as his mercy does not fail today. We find mercy in Jesus, God's only Son, who brought peace, and reconciliation for all in God's kingdom. Welcome to God's house today!)

WELCOME

(put prayer requests on yellow cards)

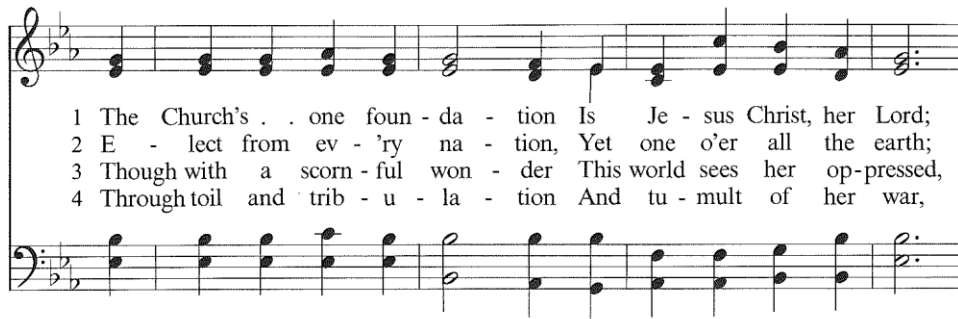
HYMN LBW #369

"The Church's One Foundation"

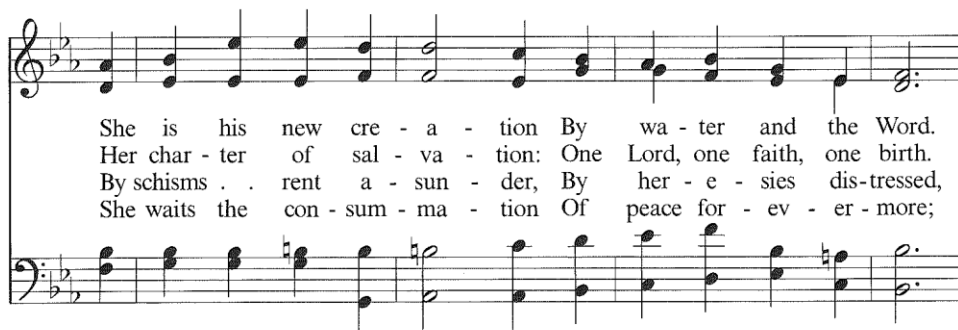
COMMUNITY IN CHRIST

369

The Church's One Foundation



1 The Church's . . one foun - da - tion Is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, Yet one o'er all the earth;
3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der This world sees her op-pressed,
4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion And tu - mult of her war,



She is his new cre - a - tion By wa - ter and the Word.
Her char - ter of sal - va - tion: One Lord, one faith, one birth.
By schisms . . rent a - sun - der, By her - e - sies dis-tressed,
She waits the con - sum - ma - tion Of peace for - ev - er - more;

From heav'n he came and sought her To be his ho - ly bride;
 One ho - ly name she bless - es, Par - takes one ho - ly food,
 Yet saints their watch are keep - ing; Their cry goes up: "How long?"
 Till with the vi - sion glo - rious Her long - ing eyes are blest,

With his own blood he bought her, And for her life he died.
 And to one hope she press - es With ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
 And soon the night of weep - ing Shall be the morn of song.
 And the great Church vic - to - rious Shall be the Church at rest.

5 Yet she on earth has union
 With God, the Three in One,
 And mystic sweet communion
 With those whose rest is won.

O blessed heav'nly chorus!
 Lord, save us by your grace,
 That we, like saints before us,
 May see you face to face.

Text: Samuel J. Stone, 1839-1900
Tune: Samuel S. Wesley, 1810-1876

AURELIA
 76 76 D

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS..... p. 56

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

C: Amen

P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

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

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most merciful God,

C: we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name. Amen

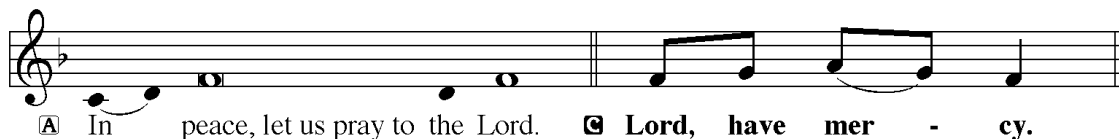
P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son,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

C: Amen

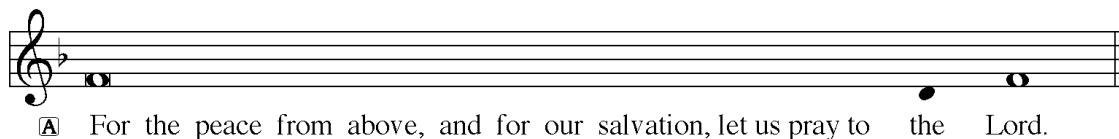
P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

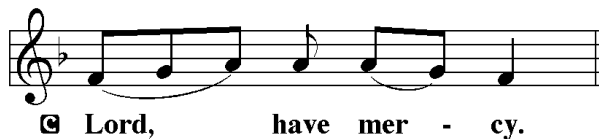
KYRIE p. 57



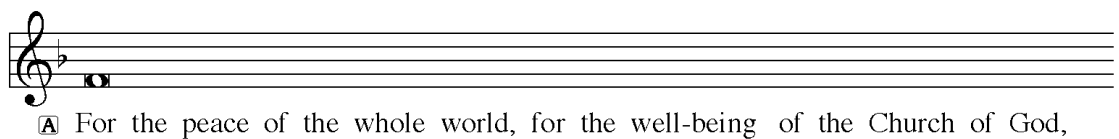
A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **G** Lord, have mer - cy.



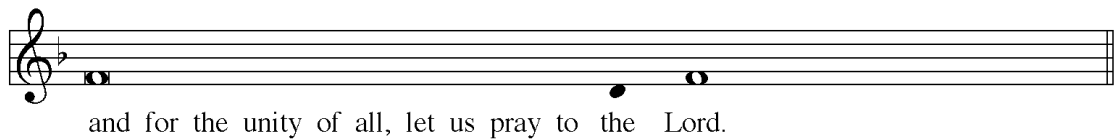
A For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



G Lord, have mer - cy.



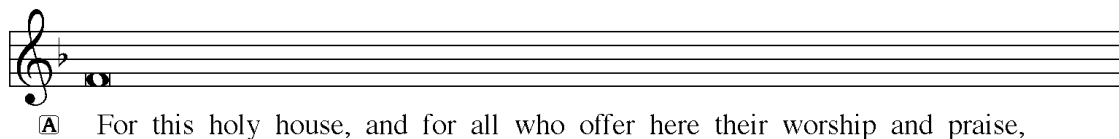
A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



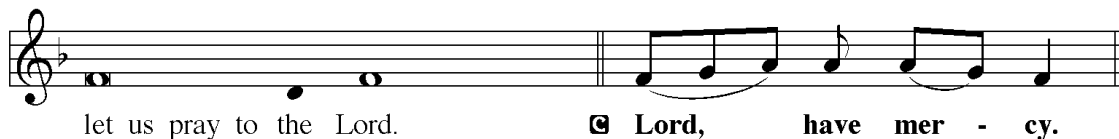
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



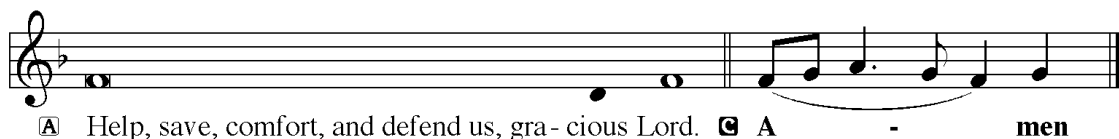
G Lord, have mer - cy.



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



let us pray to the Lord. **G** Lord, have mer - cy.



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



A Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



B Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther:



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



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God:



You take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.



You are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer.



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



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



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

SALUTATION



PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

C: Shepherding God, through your Son's cross you draw all people to yourself and reconcile the relationship between you and your world which we so carelessly neglect and fracture. Teach us to be your healing and reconciling presence in a wounded world; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING Jeremiah 23:1-6
(Jeremiah promises God's merciful action, that a righteous branch of the line of David would be raised up to restore justice and righteousness for all people. This righteous branch is Jesus.)

¹“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. ²Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. ³Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will set shepherds over

them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord.

⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”

PSALM (Read responsively)..... Psalm 23
(The psalmist put his ultimate trust in the Lord, who is like a faithful shepherd who leads his flock to clear water and green pastures.)

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

³He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

SECOND READING Ephesians 2:11-22

(St. Paul reminded his Gentile audience that once they were far off from God, but now in Christ they have been brought near to God and are no longer strangers or aliens. This same mercy brings us near to God today.)

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands —
¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

SPECIAL MUSIC Orlin Larson & LeAnn Richard
"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

ALLELUIA p. 62

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 6th chapter.

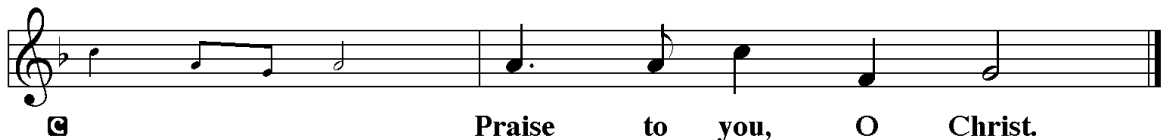
Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL READING Mark 6:30-44
(The power and compassion of Jesus is on display as He miraculously feeds a crowd of 5000 people.)

³⁰The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized

them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.



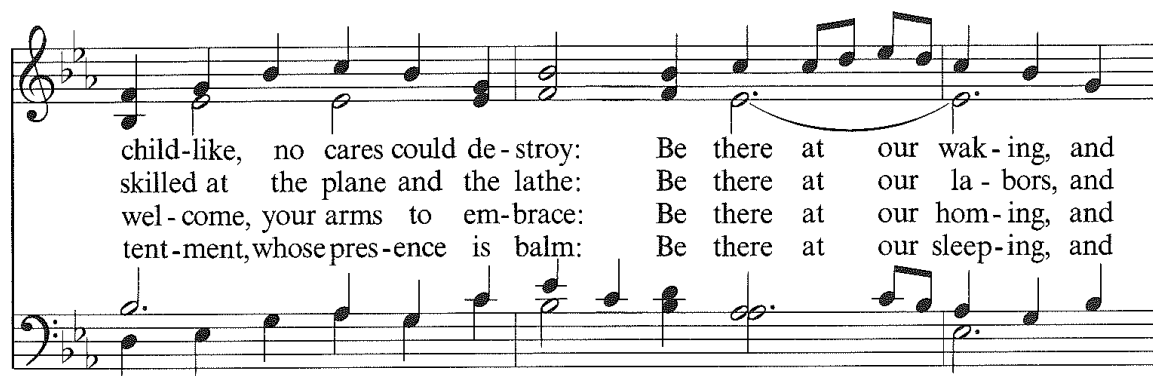
HYMN **LBW #469**
“Lord of All Hopefulness”

Lord of All Hopefulness

469



1 Lord of all hope - ful - ness, Lord of all joy, Whose trust, ev - er
2 Lord of all ea - ger - ness, Lord of all faith, Whose strong hands were
3 Lord of all kind - li - ness, Lord of all grace, Your hands swift to
4 Lord of all gen - tle - ness, Lord of all calm, Whose voice is con -



child-like, no cares could de - stroy: Be there at our wak - ing, and
skilled at the plane and the lathe: Be there at our la - bors, and
wel - come, your arms to em - brace: Be there at our hom - ing, and
tent - ment, whose pres - ence is balm: Be there at our sleep - ing, and



give us, we pray, Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
give us, we pray, Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
give us, we pray, Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.
give us, we pray, Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

SERMON Pastor Paul Krueger
“Into a Hungry World” – Mark 6:30-44

APOSTLES’ CREED p. 65

P: God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

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

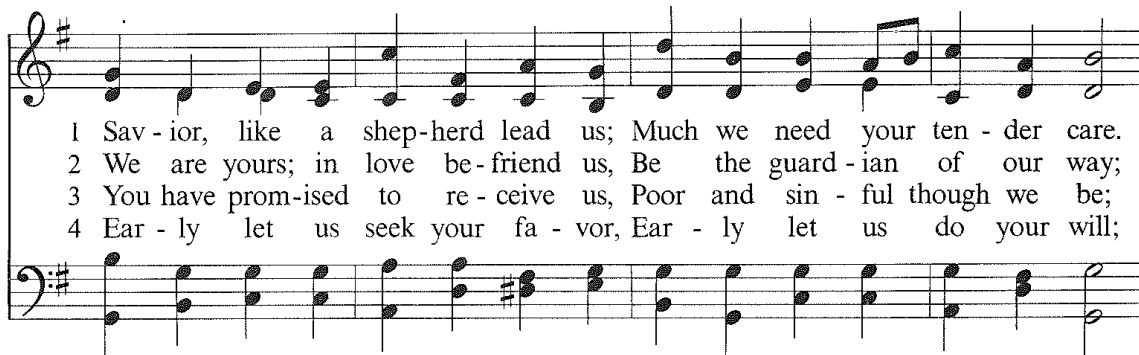
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the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


HYMN LBW #481
“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”

Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us

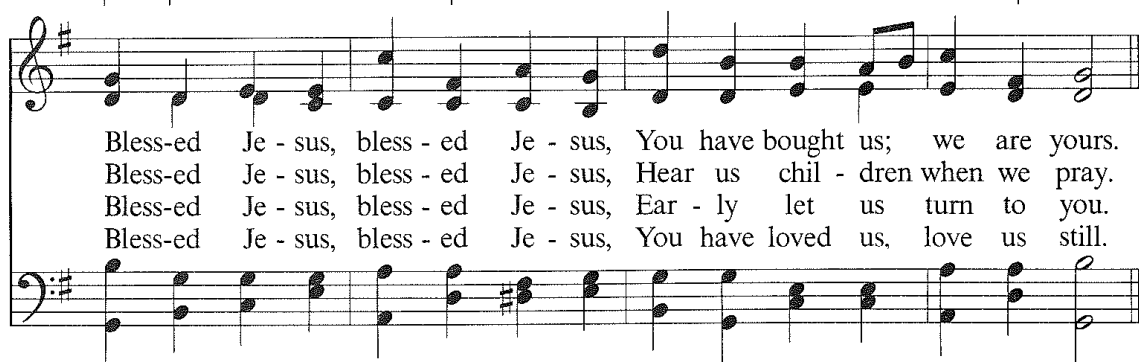
481



1 Sav - ior, like a shep - herd lead us; Much we need your ten - der care.
2 We are yours; in love be - friend us, Be the guard - ian of our way;
3 You have prom - ised to re - ceive us, Poor and sin - ful though we be;
4 Ear - ly let us seek your fa - vor, Ear - ly let us do your will;



In your pleas - ant pas - tures feed us, For our use your fold pre - pare.
Keep your flock, from sin de - fend us, Seek us when we go a - stray.
You have mer - cy to re - lieve us, Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.
Bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, With your love our spir - its fill.



Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, You have bought us; we are yours.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, Hear us chil - dren when we pray.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, Ear - ly let us turn to you.
Bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, You have loved us, love us still.

Text: Dorothy A. Thrupp, 1779-1847
Tune: Ludvig M. Lindeman, 1812-1887

HER VIL TIES
87 87 87

OFFERINGS ARE RECEIVED

OFFERTORY p. 75



C Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir -
it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re-store to me the
joy of your sal-va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

C: Benevolent God, you have granted us in abundance with all the good things that life has to offer. May we be truly grateful for our daily bread, even as we return a portion of what you have first given us as a sign of our humility and thanksgiving for your bounteous gifts. Let the treasures we have received from you be used to serve the world you love. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

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

LORD'S PRAYER p. 76

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

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 LBW #495

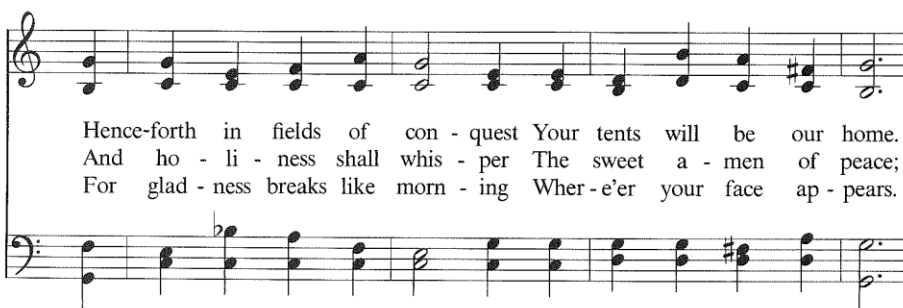
“Lead On, O King Eternal!”

495

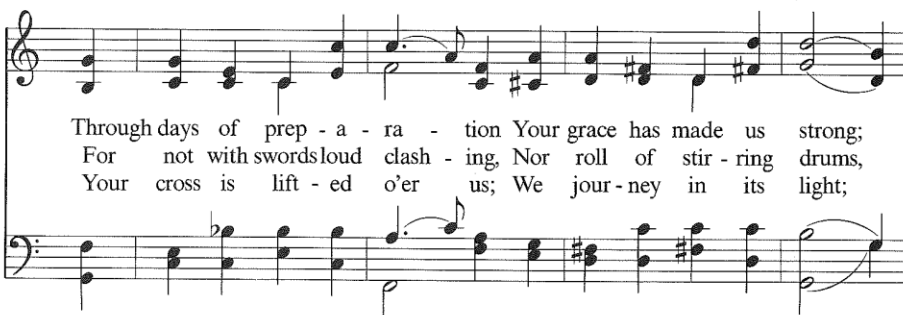
Lead On, O King Eternal!



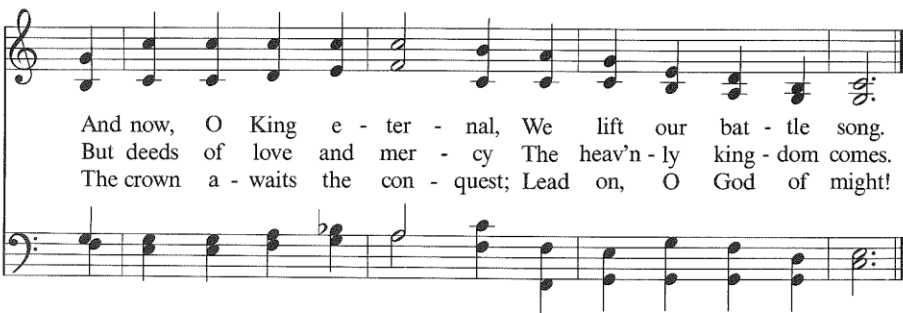
1 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal! The day of march has come;
 2 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal, Till sin's fierce war shall cease,
 3 Lead on, O King e - ter - nal: We fol - low, not with fears,



Hence-forth in fields of con - quest Your tents will be our home.
 And ho - li - ness shall whis - per The sweet a - men of peace;
 For glad - ness breaks like morn - ing Wher - e'er your face ap - pears.



Through days of prep - a - ra - tion Your grace has made us strong;
 For not with swords loud clash - ing, Nor roll of stir - ring drums,
 Your cross is lift - ed o'er us; We jour - ney in its light;



And now, O King e - ter - nal, We lift our bat - tle song.
 But deeds of love and mer - cy The heav'n - ly king - dom comes.
 The crown a - waits the con - quest; Lead on, O God of might!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

CCLI #2465135, OneLicence.net #A-713378
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Today's Worship Leaders & Volunteers – Thank You!

INTERIM PASTOR Pastor Paul Krueger
USHERS/GREETERS Gwen DeMontigny & Julie Bentz
READER Emily Retterath
ORGANIST LeAnn Richard
VIRTUAL SERVICE Dwight Rasmussen
ALTAR GUILD Julene Klosterman & Maybell Job
FELLOWSHIP/COFFEE HOUR..... Ruth Borlaug
SERVICE GROUP COORDINATORS..... Dick & Carla Bickert
Evangelism Committee

First Lutheran Church
709 5th Ave. - PO BOX 218
Washburn ND 58577
701-462-3775

INTERIM PASTOR: Paul Krueger email:
revpaulkrueger@gmail.com

Cell phone: 701-240-4712

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY: Jeannette Rost
Church Office: 701-462-3775

Email: flc@westriv.com

Website: www.flcwashburn.com

COORDINATOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES: Melissa Rothe

Email: fly@westriv.com

OFFICE HOURS: T-T-F 9:00 am - 12:30 pm, 1:30 - 3:30
W – 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

ORGANISTS: Theresa Petersen and LeAnn Richard

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Randy Hall

BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR: Gwen Hall

CUSTODIAN: Jeff Schmidt

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.

Good morning! In the name of the God of creation, Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit who guides our ways, welcome to worship.

Visitors

We welcome all visitors to First Lutheran today and ask that you sign our guest book in the narthex.

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

Sunday, July 14th, Attendance – 97

Online Viewing – 21

General Fund & Plate Giving - \$7,353

Hearing Assist

First Lutheran has hearing assist systems to be used during the worship services. If you feel you could benefit from this or want to try it, please see the ushers in the narthex.

Pastoral Care

Please call Pastor Paul (701-240-4712) or the church office (701-462-3775) if you or a loved one are in the hospital or know you will be going to the hospital. The church does not 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!

This week we pray for:

This Week's New Prayer Requests: Sande Wagner, Arlene Schwarz, Steve Reynolds (Brad & Cathy Sheldon)

Prayers of Christian Sympathy:

Long Term prayer requests:

Members: Alton Krebsbach, Howard Johnson, Karen Goehring

* The person in parenthesis is who the person is related to or friends of. Please feel free to ask these individuals how best you can pray for their family/friend.

This month we pray for:

Members:

Friends & Family: Clara Olson (Sharon Chrest)

This Quarter we pray for:

Members and Nonmembers: Corrine Kerzmann (Donna Gunderson), Marion Narum (Peggy Moran), Ty Brown (Jody & Nicole Brown), Alice Richard, Jackie Olson

Military Prayer and Card List

We pray for the Men & Women in our Military who protect our country, especially those assigned to serve overseas or away from home.

- **Members of First Lutheran on Active Duty in the Military and the National Guard:**
SGT Bryce Rost – Army National Guard
SPC Olivia Retterath – National Guard - Deployed
SPC Cassidy Sommer – National Guard
SGT Jonathan Melvard – Army National Guard
- **Friends and Family on Active Duty in the Military and in the National Guard:**
SGT Dustin Enockson – National Guard
Emily Johnson – Air Force
Bryar Anderson – Marines
1SGT Jordan Ternes – Army National Guard
Tech. SGT Andre Austin – Air Force
Hunter Feigum – National Guard
Morris Duffy – Medical Air Guard
Adam Walsvik – National Guard

Notice of Prayer List Policy

We have a monthly /quarterly prayer list cycle. When you add someone to our prayer list the request will remain on our monthly list for four weeks and then be removed. If you would like to have the request moved to our quarterly list, please contact the office and the request will be added to our “This Quarter we pray for:” list for the next three months. Please help us keep our prayer list current by communicating updates to the office at 701-462-3775. Thank you all for your faithful prayers for all of God’s people.

Large Print Bulletins

We have large print bulletins for those wanting or needing larger print. Ask the ushers for one.

Bowls and Pans

There are a lot of bowls and pans in the kitchen from food brought for funerals, etc. Please stop and check to see if any belong to you and take them home.

Office Hours

Jeannette is scheduled to report for jury duty this Thursday. So she will not know until then if she will be in the office on Thursday or Friday. She will be in on Tuesday (needs to leave at some point in the day for a while) and Wednesday for sure.

Lewis & Clark Riverboat Cruise

FLCW will be going on the Lewis & Clark Riverboat Cruise on today. Meet at the church at 2:30 pm. The cruise is at 4:00 pm. Cost is \$24 for the Riverboat ticket plus your meal. Dinner at Mayas (formerly Johnny Carino's) after the cruise.

Newsletter Deadline

Please have all articles for the August newsletter to the church office no later than noon on Monday, July 22nd. Articles not received by then may not make the newsletter because of Jeannette's schedule as noted above.

Quilting

Calling all FLCW women! Join us this Thursday, July 25th, for quilting and good fellowship. It all begins at 9:00 am and ends at noon. Please come join and learn to quilt if you don't already know how to.

Vacation Bible School

First Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School, "The Great Jungle Journey, An Epic Cruise from Genesis to Revelation", is July 30, 31 and August 1 from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. Lunch will be provided. Please scan the QR code below to register your child(ren) to guarantee souvenirs! If you have additional questions or comments, please call or text Kellie Sheldon at 701-840-8454 or Kacy Hardt at 701-351-0742. **Last day to sign up to receive all the extras is July 1st.**



2nd Annual FLC Carnival

Make sure you mark your calendars for Sunday, August 4th from 4-7 pm. That marks our 2nd Annual FLC Carnival with outdoor games, bouncy houses and wonderful food plus other games, fun and wonderful food! There are a few surprises up the committees sleeves too! More will be released as plans are finalized. They are still looking for a few volunteers to help run a few of the activities. If you are feeling the need or compelled to do so, talk to Kacy Hardt.

Altar Flower Signup Sheet

A signup sheet for altar flowers through September 29th is on the table in the narthex. Signup for that Sunday you want before it is taken. You furnish the flowers and make sure they get to the church.

Connections Magazine

The July/August issue of *Connections* is in the magazine racks in the narthex. Pick up a copy today to read updates on LCMC, NALC and other interesting articles.

Our Daily Bread and Portals of Prayer

The June/July/August issue of *Our Daily Bread* and the July - September 2024 issue of *Portals of Prayer* are in the magazine racks in the narthex. Pick up a copy to use with your daily devotions.

THIS WEEK AT FIRST LUTHERAN

TODAY	9:30 AM	Worship
	10:30 AM	Fellowship/Coffee Hour
	10:45 PM	Fireside Bible Study
	2:30 PM	FLCW leaves church for Riverboat Cruise
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting Al-Anon Meeting
MON.	Noon	Newsletter Deadline
TUES.	10:00 AM	Mommy's Group
WED.	7:00 PM	FLY
THURS.	9:00 AM	Quilting
SAT.		Bluegrass Goes Pink Concert at Cross Ranch State Park
SUN.	9:30 AM	Worship w/Holy Communion
	10:30 AM	Fellowship/Coffee Hour
	10:45 AM	Fireside Bible Study
	7:00 PM	AA Meeting Al-Anon Meeting

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11) – July 21, 2024

“¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.”

–Ephesians 2:18–20–

In 2003 I spent a semester studying abroad in Aalborg, Denmark. It was a life-long dream, and I was so excited to arrive at what would be my home for the next five months of my life. I did my best to wear clothing that helped me fit in. Danes would wear mostly neutral colors, especially gray and black. And for the most part, I could blend in pretty well... until... until I spoke Danish. I had a very limited knowledge of the language, and I could certainly get by, but my thick American accent gave me away every time. And while I did my best to blend in, it was obvious that I was a foreigner, a stranger in a strange land.

Danes have different customs and traditions from Americans. It first hit me hard when Thanksgiving rolled around. The other American students and I put on a traditional Thanksgiving meal for our Danish friends and other international students. It was a lot of fun, but it wasn't the same as celebrating in our homeland.

It can be hard, even scary, to feel out of place. We can feel as though there are barriers up, and it can be difficult to knock them down. Paul was writing this letter to brand new Christians in Ephesus. They were really struggling with barriers and cultural differences. These differences and divisions had existed between these two cultures (Jews and Gentiles) for centuries. And it led to hostility and being at odds with one another. That, in turn, led to division with God. Their sinfulness put up barriers between themselves and God. So how does one knock down those barriers? Well, we can't do it on our own. We must rely on God to knock them down for us. And God isn't going to do it with hostility the way we sinful humans might do.

We are reconciled to God through Christ. Last week we heard how we are marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the promise of his Holy Spirit. Through Christ, our differences can be knocked down and laid aside. We are united in Christ. We are apart of his family. God's grace is enough for us, and he freely gives us his grace no matter what kind of barriers we may have with others. Because God forgives us through suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus, we are called to forgive one another.

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