



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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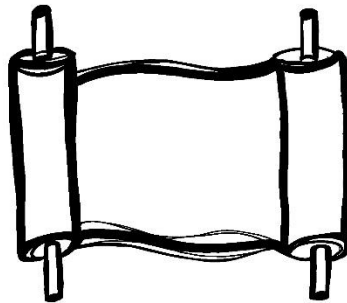
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### **Sixth Sunday after Epiphany February 12, 2023 ACS Holy Communion, Setting 12**

In today's reading from Deuteronomy we are called to choose life by loving and obeying God. Much of today's gospel reading echoes portions of the Ten Commandments. Jesus' instructions to the crowd reveal a pattern of behavior that honors both God and the neighbor, resulting in life and health for the whole community. We too are invited to embrace these commandments, not out of fear of retribution, but because God has promised that to do so means life for us.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together in joy and worship of the teachings of our Lord, who gives us decrees that speak to our hearts and reform us as God's own beloved children. Our God lays down teachings that lead us down God's ways, statutes that reveal to us the ways of living in community, and forgiveness to take away any shame that might come in our shortcomings. So together we thank our God with true hearts for God's righteousness, grace, and love, shown to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### GATHERING SONG: Spirit, Open My Heart

*Refrain*



Spir-it, o - pen my heart to the joy and pain of



liv-ing. As you love may I love, in re - ceiv - ing



and in giv - ing. Spir - it, o - pen my heart.



1 God, re - place my ston - y heart with a heart that's  
2 Write your love up - on my heart as my law, my  
3 May I weep with those who weep; share the joy of



kind and ten - der. All my cold - ness and  
goal, my sto - ry. In each thought, word, and  
friend and neigh - bor. As I live from day to

*Refrain*



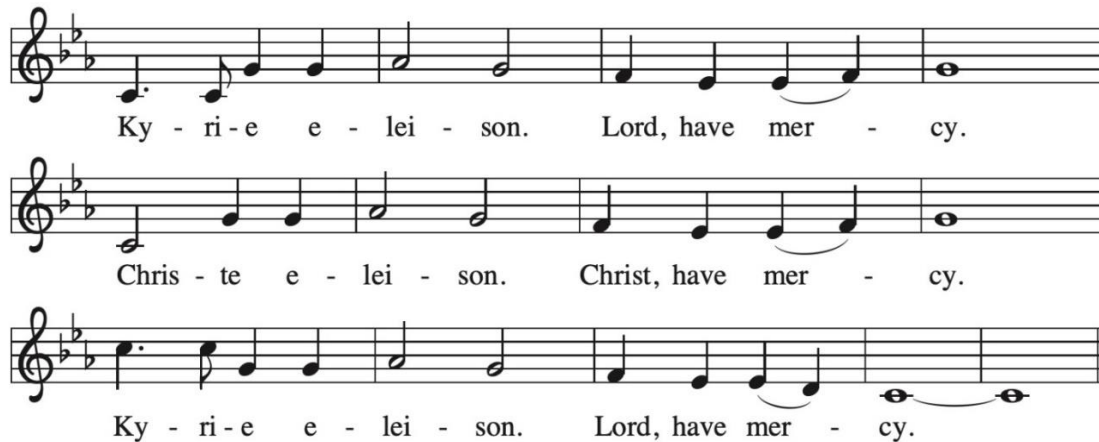
fear to your grace I now sur - ren - der.  
deed, may my liv - ing bring you glo - ry.  
day, love will be my fin - est la - bor.

## GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

## KYRIE



Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

Chris - te e - lei - son. Christ, have mer - cy.

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

## SONG OF PRAISE



1 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;  
2 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;  
3 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;

yours is the prom - ise, the bless - ing, the birth.  
yours the ho - san - nas, the dy - ing, re - birth.  
yours the a - noint - ing, the ra - di - ant worth.

Ours the re - joic - ing for Word giv - en frame;  
Ours the re - joic - ing for na - ture re - claimed;  
Ours the re - joic - ing for spir - its a - flame;

ours the thanks - giv - ing to your ho - ly name.

Ours be the tell - ing of deeds great - ly done;

yours be the glo - ry, O God, yours a - lone.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of blessing, you call us to be one with you and your creation in love, faithfulness, and truth. Help us to live in a way that is pleasing to you, adoring you with our whole heart, relating to each other in mutual support and care, appreciating your commandments, and giving thanks for all that you have done for our community and this world through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

*The LORD sets before the people of God a clear choice. Life and prosperity will come to the faithful; loss of the land will be the consequence of disobedience. Choosing life entails loving and holding fast to the Lord. Life in God's presence presupposes the promise made to the ancestors.*

[Moses said to the people:] <sup>15</sup>See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 119:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Happy are they whose way is blameless,  
who follow the teaching of the LORD!

<sup>2</sup>**Happy are they who observe your decrees  
and seek you with all their hearts,**

<sup>3</sup>who never do any wrong,  
but always walk in your ways.

<sup>4</sup>**You laid down your commandments,  
that we should fully keep them.**

<sup>5</sup>Oh, that my ways were made so direct  
that I might keep your statutes!

<sup>6</sup>**Then I should not be put to shame,  
when I regard all your commandments.**

<sup>7</sup>I will thank you with a true heart,  
when I have learned your righteous judgments.

<sup>8</sup>**I will keep your statutes;  
do not utterly forsake me.**

### SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

*Human leaders in the church are not the ones who control ministry. Rather they are coworkers who belong to God, the one who truly controls and continuously empowers the ministry of the church.*

<sup>1</sup>Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, <sup>3</sup>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? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup>The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. <sup>9</sup>For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



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



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

### GOSPEL: Matthew 5:21-37

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts his followers to embrace standards of righteousness that exceed legal requirements and traditional expectations.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

<sup>27</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if your right hand

causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

<sup>31</sup>“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup>“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup>But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup>or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Loving God, may we anointed by your Spirit to hear you speak to us this day, that we be filled with your truth and love to walk in your ways of righteousness and community, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Well, this is awkward. I’m talking about that gospel lesson that was just read, of course. I mean, I’m all for Jesus teaching us stuff, and I’m a huge fan of his Sermon on the Mount. In fact if I had the chance to actually be there to hear it in person, I’d be the least Lutheran person there as I’d make sure I’d have a front row seat. Anyway, it’s awkward because it’s just that... whenever Jesus gets real down and dirty into the nitty gritty of life, when he pulls and twangs on those real sensitive strings in our hearts, when he unapologetically calls out our shortcomings and sin, well, that’s just when it gets kind of uncomfortable.

Because really, we *are* sinners. We have all done things that we aren’t proud of. No matter how much we try to deny it, those closets are just overflowing with these skeletons that we’d rather just forget about and keep locked away forever. And so when Jesus starts picking at these skeletons, then we might start squirming in our seats. I mean, on the surface, sure, we aren’t so bad. On the surface we would probably say that we’re pretty good. On the surface, we can even fool ourselves into thinking that we don’t really do anything wrong.

And that’s when Jesus goes full Judge Dredd mode and goes over every aspect of life and points out all the evils that we didn’t even know were evil. I mean, the big ones, sure we know them. We know that we aren’t supposed to kill people, of course, that’s bad. We’d never do something like that (at least I don’t think so). But to call someone a fool? Yeah, I probably do that 5-6 times during my 10 minute commute to work every day. Double that if I’m running late. Quadruple it if there is snow on the ground.

If that wasn’t awkward enough, Jesus talks about lust. At the best of times we don’t like talking about that or even saying that word. But while we’re still reeling from how much we enjoy calling people fools, Jesus explains that a simple glance, perhaps lingering on the wrong body part, is the same kind of lust that drives us to cheat on our spouses and partners and is punishable by death. Right? Maybe there’s some grace in my aging eyes that don’t see so well anymore, because dang, that’s awkward.

Then Jesus goes and talks about divorce and ain't no one want to touch that one with a 10 foot pole... And then he wraps it all up with not making promises and oaths, which seems innocent enough until we realise that he's telling us to rely on our own integrity to speak for itself. Our integrity, Jesus? You mean this thing that you've just ripped to shreds by pointing out all the seemingly harmless and innocent actions as us deserving to burn in the pits of hell? It's like we can't win with this guy. What are we supposed to do?

I'm reminded of Paul's discourse in Romans about doing what we know we shouldn't do and not doing what we know we should and can't help but do what we do and so on and so forth. It's like this Christian life is impossible, if even the great Apostle Paul calls himself the chief of sinners.

So what's the point? Why did Jesus lay on this guilt trip? How can we ever break free from this cycle of broken integrity, unknown wrongdoings, our *sinful nature*?

Here's the thing, I remember in school we learned about the whole *nature vs nurture* debate, which is basically asking the question of whether or not we're born to be a certain way (nature) or are we formed by upbringing and outside influence to be a certain way (nurture)? Are we, from birth, just stuck to be one of those enneagram categories that we talked about a couple weeks ago? Or can we learn skills and talents from our parents, education, and various other sources to be something completely different? Are we trapped by our sinful genes, passed down by sinful Adam and Eve and the whole human race, or are we trapped by our sinful upbringing, passed down by sinful Adam and Eve and the whole human race?

Whatever it is, there really is no escaping who we are as sinner. We will do what we do when we do that thing we do. Sure, we could be genetically predisposed by nature to be a certain way, but really, we're also nurtured to accept or reject that initial program, depending on how it is. And deep down at the heart of it all, I believe that is what Jesus is trying to teach us with all this. While we are somewhat trapped in our sinful nature, we are also nurtured by the Spirit and various stimuli to not just stop the wrongdoing, but to see things differently.

I mean, Jesus is really laying down the law here in this passage. He is pointing out these faults that we might not have even guessed were faults, and showing us just how broken and sinful we are as a human species and just how far we miss that mark. Like he really is driving that home, almost to the point of us wanting to give up and not even try anymore.

But let's not forget the context of Jesus' words here. Let's not ignore what preceded this text that we talked about the past two weeks with some pretty riveting words of my own that I'm sure changed all your lives. Let's not take just this passage at face value full of all its guilt-inducing shame, but instead, let's remember the tone of Jesus' words that led us to this today.

You are the salt of the earth, remember? You are the light shining God's righteousness in the world. You. Are. Blessed. Even you fools who call other people fools. Even you wandering-eye hormonally-inclined human beings that tend to think with body parts other than the brain. Even you people, all people, who have very little integrity when compared to the very high standard of God's perfection.

See, Jesus called these people blessed salt and light, and many of the folk heard this and might have been like, yeah of course we are, we're awesome and we've earned it. They might have

on the surface told themselves and each other that they're the perfect ones, the examples for others to follow, the standard to which everyone else needs to put on themselves. But Jesus says hold on now, before you put the glory on yourself and your own discipline, don't forget you're also like this. You're murders. You're adulterers. You're liars. You are sinners.

But the good news in that is that we aren't judged by those sins, not according to God's justice and righteousness, at least. I mean, we totally are by the world's standard of course and we still shouldn't be engaging in those things. But the point is that not even that kind of behaviour would disqualify us from God's forgiveness, grace, and love.

Not because God condones them, God doesn't at all as Jesus so clearly points out to us. But because God's love is just that big. Big enough to envelope even us. Big enough to invite and welcome us into God's kingdom. Big enough to save us, sinners and all.

And so while it is totally in our nature to be sinners, we can be nurtured to be saints, not just to stop doing these things but to see people differently. To see others as God sees them. To see how each and every one of us, even in our sin, is given immeasurable value and are dearly loved and saved by a benevolent God through a grace that surpasses understanding. See our being saints isn't something that we can gain for ourselves through discipline and hard work, by solely by the gracious and salvific action of God.

Again, that doesn't mean that we can go and live out our sinful nature and act out our every carnal desire. What it means is that through the nurturing of the Spirit and the Word of God, we can learn how to not want to treat others and relate to our community in that way, but learn to regard all people as we are regarded, as God's beloved children, saved by grace, redeemed by mercy, and brought together in community by love.

So in this season after the Epiphany, may we continue to see each other as we are created to be, sinners by nature but nurtured to be saints, living as the diverse body of Christ in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Lord, Be Glorified (#744)

**CREED** (p. 104)

With all those fed by the love and decrees of God, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

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



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

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Called to follow the commandments of love and community, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your loving mercy, O God,” and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your teachings are blameless and they lead us down your paths of righteousness and community, as they reveal to us your wisdom of grace and love. Help us to live fully in these commandments, that your love might shine through us all unto all people. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada, and their bishops, pastors, and leaders; our own bishops across our church: Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, and all the assistants to the bishops; and for our companion congregations of the BC Synod and ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Hope Lutheran Church in Nanaimo and their pastor Terry Richardson; and for all the institutions that care for the elderly in our country. By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we seek your face with all our hearts, and you reveal yourself and your love for us throughout all creation and what you provide for us. May we continually see your face in all that you have made, that we might be reminded to maintain a proper relationship with this planet and effectively care for it. We also pray for those living in areas that are prone to harsh weather and natural disasters, and we especially pray for Turkey and Syria and all relief efforts serving them. By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you lay down your commandments but we often misunderstand them and live in ways that contradict the love and grace that you have for us. Guide all world leaders and politicians onto your ways of righteousness and justice, that their governing might help us all move toward peace. We pray for the areas of the world that face war, violence, and political turmoil, that reconciliation and restoration can be found. We also remember in prayer those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; that their journey might begin soon. By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we give you thanks with true hearts, for you bring us into healing and wholeness. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love shining in and around all of our lives be apparent to all whom we encounter. Especially we pray for Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Suhkwant; Winn; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Walter; Larry; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your love and grace are eternal and you never forsake us, but you keep us in your community and kingdom along with all the saints of all time. May their lives of faith continually inspire us in our own lives, that we together can further your truth and righteousness in the world. By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the example of love and community shown to us by your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

### MEAL

### DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

### PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reveals to us your truth about love and relationship, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



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

### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, mighty and loving, strong and gracious, powerful and merciful, you have given us decrees for love and life and granted to us a wisdom and truth to live together in community, working together for the sake of a world in need. And when the time was right, you sent to us your Son Jesus, to set the example of faithful living for all people, that we might learn to relate to each other with forgiveness and peace, moving us toward the life that truly is life in your name.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it and said, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this bread and cup that we are reminded of our connection through the community of the Spirit, together eating and being fed by your truth and wisdom, even as we ponder this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

Nourish us with your love, O God, instill your commandments in our hearts, and empower us to be your people, living with one another in mutual respect and care, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD'S PRAYER** (p. 112)

Joined together by love and grace of God, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Come to the table, for all is ready for the community of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (ACS booklet)  
Give Me Jesus (#770)  
Change My Heart, O God (#801)

**LAMB OF GOD**



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on  
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the  
world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks with our whole hearts for your love and fulfilling righteousness in our lives, moving us to live life in community with you and each other, proclaiming to all people the truth of your wisdom and grace, bringing your justice to all people through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

May the wisdom of God bless you and keep you,  
The love of God shine brightly in your lives and be gracious onto you,  
The peace that only God can bring look upon you with favour and feed and equip you with every good thing and welcome you into the community of the Spirit, this day and always.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (#815)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, choose good and love and community.  
**Thanks be to God.**