

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

Phone: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com
Email and e-transfers: office@graceburnaby.com
Pastor's email: pastor@graceburnaby.com
Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby
Facebook: www.facebook.com/GraceLutBurnaby



Passion / Palm Sunday April 13, 2025 ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

Today we follow Christ from triumphal entry to the cross, each waypoint of the journey marked by Jesus' compassion for those who would betray, mock, accuse, or do violence to him. though persecuted and beaten, Jesus the son of god is not disgraced; instead, he asks forgiveness for those who put him to death. we have walked the Lenten pathway these forty days, each of us invited through baptism to "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." we enter this holy week accompanying Jesus to the cross with both grief and thanksgiving in our hearts, trusting in god's redeeming love.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

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

GATHERING

ACCLAMATION (p. 256)

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL: Luke 19:28-40

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁸ After he had said this, [Jesus] went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' " ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying,

"Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!"

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

BLESSING OF PALMS (p. 256)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

We praise you, O God,

for redeeming the world through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today he entered the holy city in triumph

and was proclaimed messiah and king

by those who spread garments and branches along his way.

Bless these branches and those who carry them.

Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross,

so that, joined to his death and resurrection,

we enter into life with you;

through the same Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Let us go forth in peace, in the name of Christ. Amen.

PROCESSION: All Glory, Laud, and Honor (#344)

refrain
All glory, laud, and honor
to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.

You are the king of Israel and David's royal Son, now in the Lord's name coming, our King and Blessed One. refrain

The company of angels are praising you on high; creation and all mortals in chorus make reply. refrain

The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went; our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present. refrain

To you, before your passion, they sang their hymns of praise. To you, now high exalted, our melody we raise. refrain

Their praises you accepted; accept the prayers we bring, great author of all goodness, O good and gracious King. refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY (p. 257)

As we now enter into the contemplation of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and meditate on the salvation of the world through his sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, let us pray.

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

A reading from Isaiah.

This text, the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah, speaks of the servant's obedience amid persecution. Though the servant has been variously understood as the prophet himself or a remnant of faithful Israel, Christians have often recognized the figure of Christ in these poems.

⁴The Lord God has given me a trained tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens, wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. ⁵ The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious: I did not turn backward. ⁶ I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. ⁷The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; ⁸ he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand in court together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. ^{9a} It is the Lord GoD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 31:9-16

- ⁹ Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.
- ¹⁰ For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.
- ¹¹I am the scorn of all my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors, a dismay to my acquaintances;

when they see me in the street they avoid me.

- $^{\rm 12}$ Like the dead I am forgotten, out of mind;
 - I am as useless as a broken pot.
- ¹³ For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.

- 14 But as for me, I have trusted in you, O LORD.
 - I have said, "You are my God.
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.
- 16 Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love."

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:5-11

A reading from Philippians.

Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn that describes Jesus' humble obedience in his incarnation as a human being, even to death, and his exaltation and glory as Lord of all.

- ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
 - ⁶ who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,
 - ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a human,

- ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.
- ⁹ Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name,
- ¹⁰ so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: Luke 23:1-49

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Through the teachings and events of the passion story we see and hear the great contradictions that characterize the coming of God's reign. The leader serves the followers, proud Peter is revealed in his cowardice, and Jesus—the innocent bringer of life—is arrested, beaten, executed, and buried.

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¹ Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ² They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man inciting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." ³ Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

He answered, "You say so." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." ⁵ But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹ He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him and sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people, and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

¹⁸ Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" ¹⁹ (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city and for murder.) ²⁰ Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, ²¹ but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²² A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." ²³ But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified, and their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

²⁶ As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸ But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ [[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done

nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom." ⁴³ He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." ⁴⁸ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Eternal God, humble us in the sight of your love, that as we seek the mind of Christ we might follow you in the ways of righteousness and service, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

You know, the church calendar has a lot of stuff going on over its 50ish weeks. The different seasons are cool of course, but each season would have a big festival day or two that are set apart from the rest of the regular days. The obvious ones of course would be Christmas, Easter, and maybe Pentecost, but there are others like Reformation Sunday, Ash Wednesday, and Mother's Day for some reason. Not Father's Day, mind you, just Mother's Day (not that I'm complaining or anything).

Anyway, throughout my just over 16 years here at Grace, I've either missed or didn't have to preach on each of those festival days at least once... all but one. Anyone want to guess which big festival Sunday I've never missed? That's right, this one. Palm/Passion Sunday.

According to my super complicated and sophisticated math, that would mean that this would be my 17th Palm/Passion Sunday sermon here at Grace, which might not sound like a lot considering how many sermons I write just in general over the year, but my lanta does it ever feel like a lot of talking about the same exact thing.

I know, you all probably don't even remember what I talked about in years past, but still it isn't exactly a day that I look forward to or get too excited about, which makes it even more strange that I've never missed one in all my time here. I don't know, I've just never really been a fan of this day. It is just a day that has so much going against it, that it's almost confusing, especially in my preparation for it. I mean, it's like a task and a half to source out the greenery for us to wave around and figure out how to decorate the space up here. It's a huge struggle to decide what colour to wear for today and just be happy with the decision, because the liturgy calls for a colour that we just don't have, and I'm not really wanting to buy a whole set just for this one day of the year. One day that I never miss, apparently, but one day nonetheless. And of course, the whole mashing two very contrasting themes together into one day is something that I don't know if I will ever get used to.

I mean, it just makes the day awkward.

I know, I know, I'm one to talk as I'm pretty awkward myself. But you know what I mean, don't you? I've talked about this before, but it's awkward to have the joyous Palm Sunday on the same day as the solemn and somber Sunday of the Passion. It's awkward to hear the somewhat pleading and faith-filled shouts of "Hosanna" morph into the twisted and anger-filled cries of "crucify him". It's awkward to navigate this dichotomy of two very different people groups that hold very strongly to opposing world

views and paradigms. And if we're honest, in the backdrop and landscape of our world today, this dichotomy just hits different.

Like, there are no shortage of walls that divide us these days, are there. There are plenty of lines, barriers, and chasms that split us apart. Almost everywhere we look, there is a reason to disagree, dislike, and even hate on the other.

And the problem with this is that, as of late, it seems like these walls are getting taller and thicker. It seems easier now to clump whole people groups together and label them all as wrong. The whole "if you're not for us, you're against us" mentality seems to be more prevalent than ever.

And today just seems to exasperate that.

I mean, like I said there are clearly two groups of people here in these two main stories we get for today, am I right? There is the group of the faithful of Triumphal Entry story and then the group of the hateful of the Passion narrative. There are those who are with us and recognise the Messiah and those that are against us and only see a traitor. There are those like us that believe that Jesus saves and those who aren't and want Jesus to die.

They have to be different groups, right?

There's no way they can be the same. There's no way that they could change their mind about someone that quickly. There's no way that they could be so... hypocritical.

And that's the thing. They likely are the same group of people, give or take a couple disciples and Pharisees or so. They likely did change their mind or at least moved the goal posts of what is right and wrong to fit in with their predetermined paradigms. They likely are that surprisingly hypocritical... just like we are.

Because if we're honest, while we might not go from "Hosanna" to "crucify him" over the course of week, we do go from "amen" to "who me" when it comes to God's calling for our lives. We do go from accepting God's love for us to thinking that there's no way that God loves *the others*. We do go from confessing Jesus with our lips but then go out and deny him with our lives.

This isn't to say that you are all awful people, because I'm including myself in this and I'm pretty awesome. But this is to say that this is human nature, this is just what we do and how we are, this is the sin that permeates our lives whether we recognise it or not. I mean, we can totally recognise in others of course, but the nature of this Palm/Passion Sunday calls and leads us to recognise it in ourselves.

In fact, all of the season of Lent that we're finishing up today with this festival is about that.

We can say that we're not perfect, but the discipline and practice of Lent shows us just how much and in what practical ways that is true. We can say that we draw lines between us and them, but this day of Palm Sunday combined with the Sunday of the Passion reveals to us how deep and almost unpassable those lines can be for us. We can say that we're sinners in need of a Saviour, but throughout the lessons, seasons, and festival days, God shows us just how much we actually do get that Saviour.

But it is important to note that it isn't because of our sin or recognition of it that God chooses to open for us the doors of salvation. It isn't our shouts and pleas of Hosanna that makes us worthy of being welcomed and included in God's plan of mercy and redemption. It isn't even the act of unjustly convicting and condemning Jesus to die on a cross that saves us.

Rather, it is God who decides to save us in spite of all of that. It by God's grace that our imperfection, hypocrisy, and sin don't exclude us. It is because God, who is all love, chooses to extend that love to all people no matter their background, no matter their world paradigms, and no matter what side of that humanly created line they land on, and saves us.

See while this day marries Palm Sunday and the Sunday of the Passion together in this awkward dichotomy, it brings to light the awkward dichotomy that we have in ourselves of law and gospel, saint and sinner, light and darkness. While this season of Lent highlights all the ways that we don't deserve what we get, it also reminds us that we get it anyway in abundance. While our faith reminds us of who we are as humans fully fallen and separated from God, we are also assured that God pushes aside those lines, breaks down those walls, and bridges those gaps into our hearts and declares us as beloved, welcomed, and saved children of God, brought into the unending arms of grace and love along with all the saints who are just as sinful but forgiven as we are.

So as we move from this season of Lent into this holiest of weeks that will culminate in the glorious resurrection of Christ, may we always recognise and see the lines that God erases, the walls that God passes through, and the dichotomies that God crosses, not to bring upon us guilt and shame, but to lift up just how big and wide God's love and grace are. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: How Long, O God (#698)

CREED

Together with all of God's people, forgiven and saved, let's 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,

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

and the life everlasting. Amen.

Led into repentance and reconciliation by and with the Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your comforting mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer.** Lord, by your comforting mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all holiness, you have mercy on us when we are in trouble, and you save us from all that oppresses us. Strengthen us in our faith and devotion to you and your ways, and open our eyes to see your grace in the world more clearly. Lord, by your comforting mercy, hear our prayer.

God of resurrection, you lift us up when we are weighed down with grief and sighing, and you shine your light through us for the sake of the world. Be with us in our ministries and service, that all people might see the depth of your grace. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our full communion partners the Anglican Church of Canada and the Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for First Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their interim pastor Dave Lefsrud; and for the Lutheran Campus ministries throughout BC and all of Canada, and all the chaplains that serve them. Lord, by your comforting mercy, hear our prayer.

God of all creation, you strengthen us with your love and care and reassure us of your presence through all that you have made and entrusted to us. Help us in our stewardship of this planet, that it might continue to house life for generations. Lord, by your comforting mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of righteousness, the world without you has become judgmental, casting shame and disgrace on those who are different. Give all citizens of the world's nations and all their leaders and politicians your gift of patience and understanding, that we might be able to work together toward peace. We especially pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into this country: Abraham Barhane; Solyana Amanuel; and Filimon Abraha; as well as for those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Mery Gabramikael. Lord, by your comforting mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, we trust in you and you are our God and you bring to us your grace and healing. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your compassionate love might shine through our community and lives. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Joe; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Hwee Yang; Ephraim; Kelly; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... Lord, by your comforting mercy, hear our prayer.

God of all eternity, our time is in your hands and your face shines upon us and all the saints living in your kingdom. Remind us always of the lives of faith that we are connected to, and may their example of love and service inform us in our own faith. Lord, by your comforting mercy, hear our prayer.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the grace and peace given to us though the passion of Jesus Christ, our risen Saviour. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

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, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who enters our lives to reveal to us the ways of your everlasting love, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 144)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Yes Lord you are holy and the heavens and earth are full of your glory. You have created us as your people, you have gifted us with your love and grace, and you have saved us through the life and teachings of Jesus our Lord, whom you have sent to us to be one of us that we might be able to see and feel your presence in our lives.

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

And then, after they ate it, he took the cup, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for 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."

For it is in this bread and cup that we see Christ's life, suffering, and death, that makes way for our lives, suffering, and death, that we might together be joined in declaring the basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, as you show us your grace and mercy through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into God's grace by the Holy Spirit, 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

Taste and see that the Lord is with us. **Thanks be to God.**

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 146)

O God, Why Are You Silent (#703)

When Pain of the World Surrounds Us (#704)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have given us this heavenly food and nourished us with your loving Word. Strengthen us in our faith as we move into this holiest of weeks, that as we look forward to the glorious resurrection of our Lord, we might remember and repent from the sin that put him on the cross. In Christ we pray.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you life in harmony with one another, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, and the God of all grace bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: God of Grace and God of Glory (#705)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, for God remembers you.

Thanks be to God.

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