

**St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
3976 Hendricks Avenue Jacksonville, FL



**Holy Communion**  
**Second Sunday in Lent**  
**February 28, 2021**





# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

## Welcome to St. Mark's

We are happy that you are here today, whether it is your first visit as our guest or as a long-time member. Children are welcome in worship! You are welcome to sit near the front where your children can see all of the activity and more fully participate. We also have bulletins made especially for children.

## Holy Communion

All who come seeking Jesus are welcome to the Lord's table. Communion is received in both kinds today. Please know that your portion of bread includes a drop of wine that has been prepared in advance. Further instructions are included at the appropriate spot in this bulletin. See our website for instructions if you plan to receive communion through the drive-up option.

## Worship

"ELW" refers to "Evangelical Lutheran Worship" – the red hymnal in the pew racks. The assembly reads the parts of the liturgy in bold font.

Worship folder key: **P**=Pastor, **L**=Lector/Lay Reader, **A**=Assisting Minister, **All**=All,

## Singing and speaking

*Sotto voce* is a musical term that literally translates as "under the voice." Choral directors use this term when we don't want our choirs to "over-sing" – often because a rehearsal is going to be very long, or we want them to conserve energy for more vocally demanding music to be sung later in the rehearsal.

During this time of pandemic, worshipers are requested to sing and speak *sotto voce*, and to wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose.

**Inclusive language:** Copyright laws prohibit us from printing any language in our hymns and liturgies other than what is in the original. Should you find that the words used for God, or for humans, are restrictive and hinder your worship, you are welcome to say/sing other appropriate words which you find more inclusive or expansive.

## Our Facility

Restrooms are located in the gym. Signs point the way, but feel free to ask an usher for assistance.

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

## GATHERING

**The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.**

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**OPENING VOLUNTARY** *“Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley” with “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”*  
 setting, Thomas Keesecker

*At the sound of the courtyard bell, the assembly stands and faces the ministers.*

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

**A** Amen.

**P** God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**P** Most merciful God,

**A** we confess that we are captive 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.

☐ In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God 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.

☐ Amen.

*The assembly remains standing while the ministers enter. The assembly is seated when the ministers sit. The assembly remains seated to sing the hymn.*

**GATHERING HYMN *In the Cross of Christ I Glory (ELW 324)***



1 In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, tow'r - ing  
 2 When the woes of life o'er - take me, hopes de -  
 3 When the sun of bliss is beam - ing light and  
 4 Bane and bless - ing, pain and plea - sure, by the



o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of  
 ceive, and fears an - noy, nev - er shall the  
 love up - on my way, from the cross the  
 cross are sanc - ti - fied; peace is there that



sa - cred sto - ry gath - ers round its head sub - lime.  
 cross for - sake me; lo, it glows with peace and joy.  
 ra - diance stream - ing adds more lus - ter to the day.  
 knows no mea - sure, joys that through all time a - bide.

Text: John Bowring, 1792–1872

Music: RATHBUN, Ithamar Conkey, 1815–1867

**GREETING**

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

**A** **And also with you.**

**LITANY FOR LENT**

**P** O Christ, out of your fullness we have all received grace upon grace.  
You are our eternal hope;  
you are patient and full of mercy;  
you are generous to all who call upon you.

**A**

The musical notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. It consists of two phrases: 'Save us, Lord.' and 'Save us, Lord.'. The first phrase has a quarter note for 'Save', a quarter note for 'us,', and a half note for 'Lord.'. The second phrase has a quarter note for 'Save', a quarter note for 'us,', and a half note for 'Lord.'. A slur is placed under the 'Save us' of the second phrase.

Save us, Lord. Save us, Lord.

**P** O Christ, fountain of life and holiness,  
you have taken away our sins.  
On the cross you were wounded for our transgressions  
and were bruised for our iniquities.

**A** (sung) **Save us, Lord. Save us, Lord.**

**P** O Christ, obedient unto death,  
source of all comfort, our life and resurrection,  
our peace and reconciliation.

**A** (sung) **Save us, Lord. Save us, Lord.**

**P** O Christ, Savior of all who trust in you,  
hope of all who die in you, and joy of all the saints:

**A** (sung) **Save us, Lord. Save us, Lord.**  
(continued)



## WORD

### God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

#### **FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16**

*As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.*

☒ A reading from Genesis.

<sup>1</sup>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup>"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

The word of the Lord.

☒ **Thanks be to God.**



**PSALM: Psalm 22:23-31**

*The assembly sings the refrain. A cantor sings the stanzas.*



All the ends of the earth shall re - mem - ber and turn to the LORD.

<sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's line, give glory.  
Stand in awe of the LORD, all you offspring of Israel.

<sup>24</sup>For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the LORD's face hidden from them;  
but when they cry out, the LORD hears them.

<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the great assembly;  
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

<sup>26</sup>The poor shall eat and be satisfied,  
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever! **R**

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;  
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

<sup>28</sup>For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
who rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup>Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;  
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

<sup>30</sup>Their descendants shall serve the LORD,  
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

<sup>31</sup>They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying to them, "The LORD has acted!" **R**

**SECOND READING: Romans 4:13-25**

*Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.*

**L** A reading from Romans.

<sup>13</sup>The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup>For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. <sup>18</sup>Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” <sup>19</sup>He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup>No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” <sup>23</sup>Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup>but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup>who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The word of the Lord.

**AD** **Thanks be to God.**

*The assembly remains seated to sing the gospel acclamation.*

**GOspel ACCLAMATION**

**AD**



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.

*The assembly stands for the reading.*

**GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38**

*After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter's response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.*

☞ The holy gospel according to Mark.

🔊 **Glory to you, O Lord!**

<sup>31</sup>[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.<sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

☞ The gospel of the Lord.

🔊 **Praise to you, O Christ!**

*The assembly is seated.*

**SERMON**

Pastor Daniel Locke

*Silence for reflection follows the sermon.*

*The assembly remains seated, singing sotto voce.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY** *Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake* (ELW 799)



1 "Come, fol - low me," the Sav - ior spake, "all in my way a -  
 2 "I am the light; I light the way, a god - ly life dis -  
 3 "I teach you how to shun and flee what harms your soul's sal -  
 4 Then let us fol - low Christ, our Lord, and take the cross ap -



bid - ing; de - ny your - selves, the world for - sake, o -  
 play - ing; I bid you walk as in the day; I  
 va - tion; from ev - 'ry guile your heart I free, from  
 point - ed, and, firm - ly cling - ing to his word, in



bey my call and guid - ing. Oh, bear the cross, what -  
 keep your feet from stray - ing. I am the way, and  
 sin and its temp - ta - tion. I am the ref - uge  
 suf - f'ring be un - daunt - ed. For those who bear the



e'er be - tide; take my ex - am - ple for your guide."  
 well I show how you should so - journ here be - low."  
 of the soul and lead you to your heav'n - ly goal."  
 bat - tle's strain the crown of heav'n - ly life ob - tain.

Text: Johann Scheffler, 1624–1677; tr. Charles W. Shaeffer, 1813–1896, alt.

Music: MACHS MIT MIR, GOTT, Bartholomäus Gesius, 1555–1613; adapt. Johann Herman Schein, 1586–1630

**CREED**

**A** As we follow Christ, our Lord, and take up our cross, let us proclaim with the whole church what we believe:

**A** We believe in one God,  
 the Father, the Almighty,  
 maker of heaven and earth,  
 of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
 the only Son of God,  
 eternally begotten of the Father,  
 God from God, Light from Light,  
 true God from true God,  
 begotten, not made,  
 of one Being with the Father;  
 through him all things were made.  
 For us and for our salvation  
 he came down from heaven,  
 was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
 and became truly human.  
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
 he suffered death and was buried.  
 On the third day he rose again  
 in accordance with the scriptures;  
 he ascended into heaven  
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
 and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
 who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
 who has spoken through the prophets.  
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

**A** Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

*The assembly kneels or is seated. A brief silence.*

**A** Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

**A** All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

**A** You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give wisdom and courage in our battle with Covid-19. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

**A** In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Hear the prayers from our own community for . . . and those we name aloud or in our hearts. <<pause>> Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

**A** You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Bless the children of St. Mark's Ark entrusted to our care. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

**A** We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God.

**AD** **Your mercy is great.**

**P** We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**AD** **Amen.**

*The assembly may stand.*

**PEACE**

*The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.*

**P** The peace of Christ be with you always.

**AD** **And also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words. Please refrain from shaking hands and hugging.*

*The assembly is seated.*

## MEAL

### God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**MUSICAL OFFERING** *Cross of Jesus*

Robert Benson

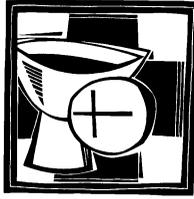
*Cross of Jesus, cross of sorrow, where the blood of Christ was shed, perfect Man on thee did suffer, perfect God on thee has bled!*

*Here the King of all the ages, throned in light ere worlds could be, robed in mortal flesh is dying, crucified by sin for me.*

*O mysterious condescending! O abandonment sublime! Very God himself is bearing all the sufferings of time.*

*Cross of Jesus, cross of sorrow, where the blood of Christ was shed, perfect Man on thee did suffer, perfect God on thee has bled!*

William J. Sparrow-Simpson, 1869-1952



*The assembly stands at the direction of the assisting minister.*

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

**A** Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone,  
but with words of grace and life.

Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**AD** **Amen.**

### **DIALOGUE**

**P** The Lord be with you.

**AD** **And also with you.**

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**AD** **We lift them to the Lord.**

**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

### **PREFACE**

**P** It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You call your people to cleanse their hearts  
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,  
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,  
we may come to the fullness of your grace.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,  
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
 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.

**THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

☞ Blessed are you, O God of the universe.  
 Your mercy is everlasting  
 and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.  
 Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.  
 Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.  
 Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness  
 to the land of milk and honey.  
 Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.  
 Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.  
 Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
 and gave it for all to drink, 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.

With this bread and cup  
 we remember our Lord's passover from death to life  
 as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

O God of resurrection and new life:  
 Pour out your Holy Spirit on us  
 and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
 Bless this feast.  
 Grace our table with your presence.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.  
 Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.  
 Breathe new life into us.  
 Send us forth,  
 burning with justice, peace, and love.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places,  
 with the earth and all its creatures,  
 with sun and moon and stars,  
 we praise you, O God,  
 blessed and holy Trinity,  
 now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**AD** **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,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

*An usher will direct all those seated on the choir side of the nave first, followed by those seated on the pulpit side. Please observe proper social distancing as you approach the presiding minister. Take a package of bread (do not open it until you are seated) and return to your seat by the outside aisle. We will consume the elements together.*

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

**P** Taste and see that the Lord is good.

**MUSIC DURING COMMUNION *If You But Trust in God to Guide You***

setting, Walter L. Pelz

*When all are seated*

**P** The body of Christ, given for you. **AD** **Amen.**

**A** The blood of Christ, shed for you. **AD** **Amen.**

*All consume the communion elements at the same time.*

*The assembly sings as the table is cleared.*

Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have prepared in the sight of ev-'ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the na - tions and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.

*The assembly stands at the direction of the assisting minister.*

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**A** Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven.  
Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage:  
may our fasting be hunger for justice;  
our alms, a making of peace;  
and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**AD** Amen.

## SENDING

**God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.**

### BLESSING

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and † give you peace.

**A** Amen.

*The assembly is seated for the sending hymn. After the final stanza has been sung, the assembly stands for the procession and dismissal.*

**SENDING HYMN *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me (ELW 325)***

*(See page 21.)*

### DISMISSAL

**A** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**A** Thanks be to God.

**CLOSING VOLUNTARY “*On My Heart Imprint Your Image*” with “*Bless Now, O God, the Journey*”**  
setting, Thomas Keesecker

*As you depart, please be mindful of social distancing. Greet each other with waves and gently spoken words. Take your bulletin and bread wrapper with you and dispose of them at home. (Recycling your bulletin is encouraged!) Social conversation may take place on the church's front lawn or in the courtyard, but please don't block the entrances!*

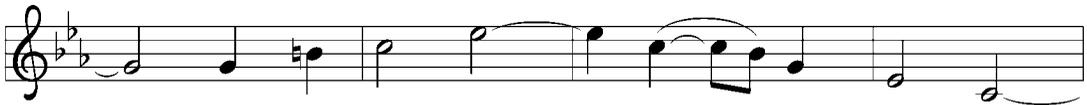
## *I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*



1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;  
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;  
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;



all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,  
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,  
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,



Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual  
 Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual

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## UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

### **George Herbert, hymnwriter, died 1633**

**Monday, March 1, 2021**

An excellent scholar, Herbert served briefly in the English parliament, then became a parish priest. He was known for devoted care of his parishioners, as well as for writing poetry and hymns, including "Come, my way, my truth, my life." He died at age 40.

### **John Wesley, died 1791; Charles Wesley, died 1788; renewers of the church**

**Tuesday, March 2, 2021**

These brothers led a revival originally intended to remain within the Church of England, one that involved frequent communion and advocacy for the poor. Except for a brief time in America, they worked in England. Charles was also a prolific hymn writer. After their deaths, their work led to the formation of the Methodist Church.



**GOSPEL MESSAGE****February 28, 2021****SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT****A Love That Lets Go**

Sometimes we are just not to be trusted with the task of loving. When we really, really love someone or something, our fingers can grasp too tightly, and our fists clench a little too firmly. For fear of losing what we love, we can squeeze the life out of what we were trying to protect.

Today, Jesus announces the trajectory of his mission: he is going to be put to death after great suffering and rejection, and he is going to be raised from the dead on the third day. This announcement sends Peter's hands reaching out to hold onto Jesus with fierce firmness. Peter doesn't want to lose the one he loves, and he goes so far as to shame and criticize Jesus for his words.

Have you ever acted like Peter, letting fear of losing someone you love thwart your ability to actually love them?

When Jesus says that those who try to save their lives are going to lose their lives, he is talking about our instinct to hold on too tightly to the things that we love. Somewhere in this move, our love actually becomes control. In the moment when the instinct to control takes hold, love and life are lost.

Jesus' words invite us to back up. We acknowledge our tight grip on God, on each other, on our own hearts. We let a little air in to those places where our tight grip has been suffocating life. We gather to worship a God who loves this world so deeply that God would rather die at our hands than coerce us into reciprocating that love. Today, we come to know God's love, which never seeks to control or pin us down, but which breathes life into the world.

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