

Third Sunday in Lent

Holy Communion

9:00 a.m., March 23, 2025



Welcome to worship this morning!

We are glad you're here! Please know that **children** are welcome to remain in worship; they are also welcome to take a break in our "Kid's Korner" in the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

All who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome; you may also come forward to receive a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation to kneel at the altar rail. The pastor will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into the red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please **do not sip** from the chalices at this time. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or the pastor can deliver the sacrament to you.

You may also use a pre-filled communion kit, available at the usher's table.

All are welcome!

PRELUDE: *Erbarm' dich mein, O Herre Gott*

Johann Gottfried Walther

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate One,
you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,
but our lives do not always reflect you
and your love for the world.
We do not show others the tender compassion
you have shown to us.
We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality
you grant to all people.
We oppress others,
even though you have set us free again and again.
We squander the abundant gifts of the earth.
Transform our lives
and guide us again in the way of the cross.
Amen.

Beloved in Christ,
God's arms are always stretched open wide
to welcome the wandering ones home.
In ☩ Christ your sins are forgiven.
You have a place in God's house forever.
Amen.

OPENING HYMN: *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*

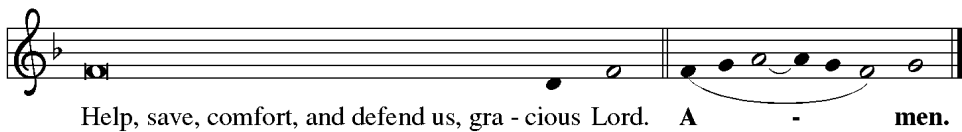
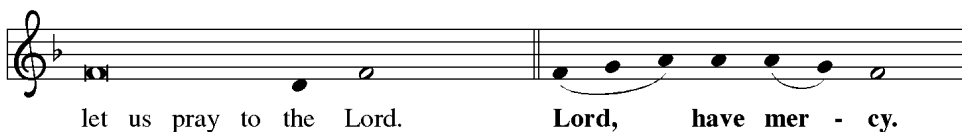
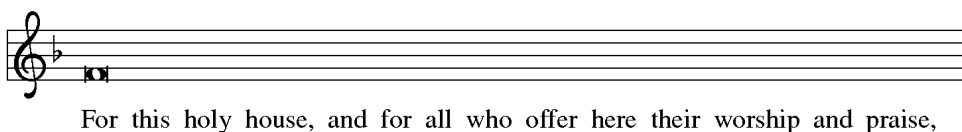
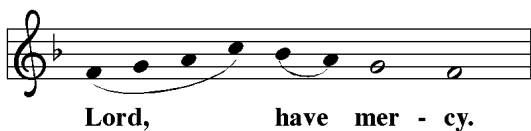
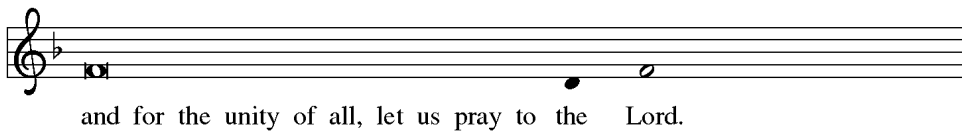
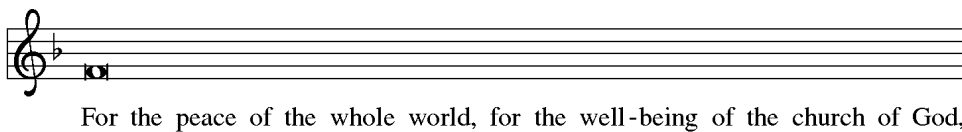
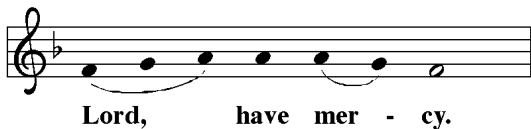
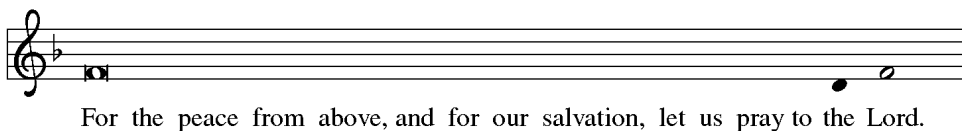
ELW 611

GREETING

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

KYRIE

ELW Setting 3



PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**
The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-13

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah:

¹ Ho, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;

listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know,

and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out in joy
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

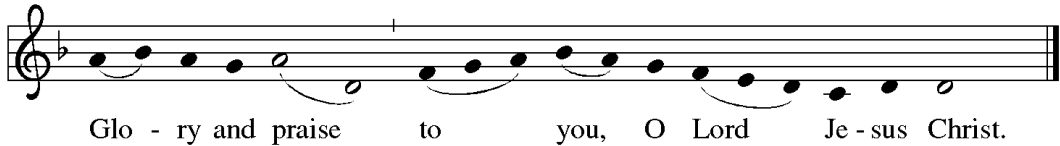
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle,
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW Setting 5



HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 13:1-9

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.² [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON:

Pastor Brian

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Light Dawns on a Weary World*

ELW 726

APOSTLES' 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

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations. May leaders serve their people and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to thrive. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in need. Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural disasters and human conflict. Aid communities in coming together to mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly. Teach us to welcome our neighbors to the table of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens, clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and thirst. Bless our Sunday School, Confirmation, and high school Youth Group, that younger generations of your children may grow to know and love you. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The congregation may be seated.

OFFERING

At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online at stmatthewavon.org/give, using the QR code in this bulletin, or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY

PRESENTATION HYMN: *As the Grains of Wheat*

ELW 465

All rise as the gifts are brought forward.

Refrain

As the grains of wheat once scat-tered on the hill were
gath-ered in - to one to be - come our bread; so may all your peo-ple from
all the ends of earth be gath-ered in - to one in you.
As this cup of bless - ing is shared with - in our midst,
may we share the pres - ence of your love.

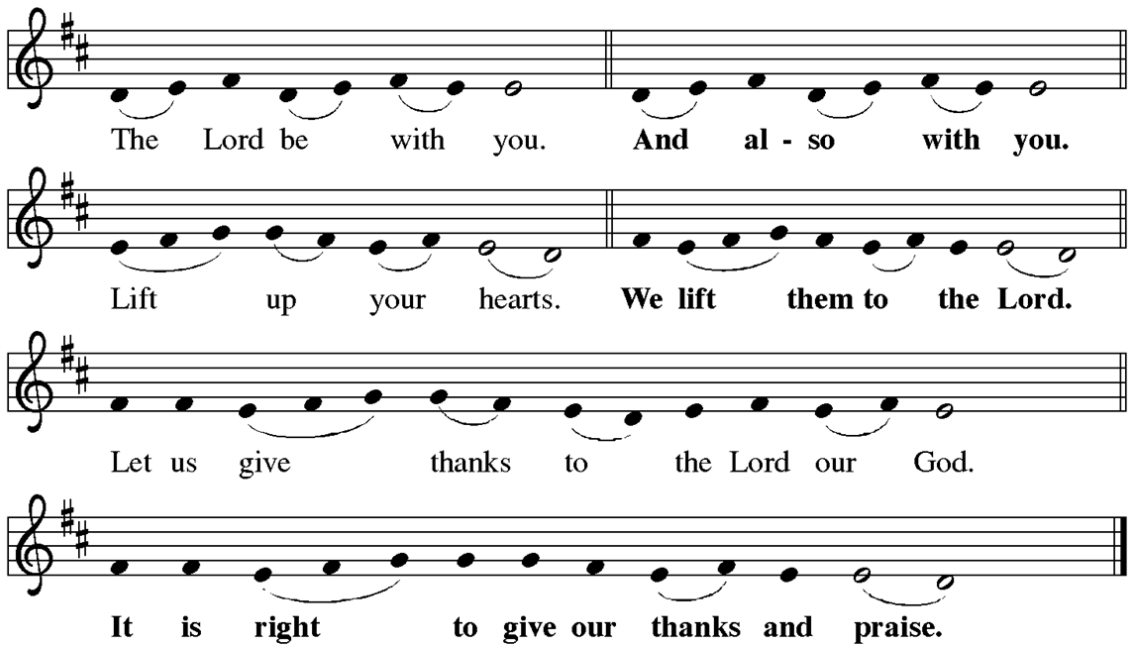
Refrain

Text: Didache, 2nd cent.; Marty Haugen, b. 1950; Music: Marty Haugen; Text and Music © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc.

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious Provider,
you set your immense treasures among us,
opening your heart to the world.
As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love,
deepen our commitment to sharing those
treasures with others,
through our Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION



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:

SANCTUS

ELW Setting 5

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

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
 who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
 who preached good news to the poor,
 and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.
Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.
**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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

At this time, ushers will direct the congregation to approach the altar where you may kneel or stand. You will receive a communion wafer from the pastor, which you are invited to intinct (dip) into the red wine or white grape juice held by the communion assistant. Please do not sip from the chalices. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or the pastor will deliver the sacrament to your seat.

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

THE DISTRIBUTION

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

AGNUS DEI

ELW Setting 5

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. A - men.

COMMUNION HYMN: *O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts*

ELW 658

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and made us new.
Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities,
that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom,
in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

As you go on your way may Christ go with you.
May he go before you to show you the way,
Behind you to encourage you, Beside you to befriend you, Above you to watch over,
And within you to give you peace. ✠ **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Today's Altar Flowers are given in loving memory of Bulleyya Thorlapati.

TODAY'S ADULT FORUM

Join us for a three-week series during Adult Forum where we will explore what it means to be part of our St. Matthew community. Together we will identify the essential ministries that make a difference in our lives, hear personal stories from members about their journey, and celebrate the milestones and memories that have shaped our history. Don't miss this opportunity to connect, reflect, and honor our shared journey as we write our next chapter together at St. Matthew.

MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS

Altar Guild: Doreen O'Leary & Kathy Alsgaard

Lector: Ben Wright

Assisting Minister: Will Abbott

Usher: Matthew Coslett

Acolyte: Wyatt Boswell

Live Stream: Perry Hasson

Cantor: Roy Zurell

Coffee Hour: Karen Wright & Anne Fenn

STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org

Associate Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Heckman – revryan@stmatthewavon.org

Director of Music: Sarah Schiener-Redenz – music@stmatthewavon.org

Office Administrator: Paul Martin – office@stmatthewavon.org or (860) 673-3301

Sexton: Roy Zurell – contact the office

VISIT US ONLINE

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

YouTube: @StMatthewAvon

Facebook: [com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch](https://www.facebook.com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch) **Instagram:** @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	10:20am: Grief Support Group
Tuesday	10am: A.A. (Open to All)	2pm: Choir Rehearsal	
Wednesday	9:30am & 5:15pm: W.W		
Thursday	2pm: Centering Prayer	6pm: Midweek Lenten Service	Following Service: Lenten Book Discussion
Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	10:20am: Grief Support Group

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LENTEN MIDWEEK BOOK DISCUSSION

Throughout the 2025 Lenten season, Pastor Brian and Rev Ryan will lead a study of Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*, a short treatise on Jesus's ministry to the poor and oppressed. We will continue meeting Thursday evenings after our 6:00pm Lenten midweek service on 3/27, 4/3, and 4/10. We hope to see many of you there!

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP | Sunday, Following Worship

Grief Support Group will begin meeting following the Service. If you have experienced loss and want to receive support or help others by sharing your experience, please join us. **We will continue to meet in the Conference Room: March, 23, 30 and April 6.** This is support, not counseling, If you have any questions, please call or text Ellen Ericson at 860-305-4996, or eeegregory3@sbcglobal.net.

CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND: HARTFORD SEMINARY

Tuesday, March 25th 5:00 p.m.

The New England Synod is delighted to welcome staff from the Environmental Education Center (EEC), a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Mr. Simon Awad, director of the EEC and two of his colleagues will be touring four different synods during their trip in March and April, starting with the New England Synod on March 23rd. There will be a presentation and time for Q&A at each of the locations listed. We encourage all who are able to avail themselves of this opportunity to hear firsthand of the work this important organization is doing in the midst of unthinkable conditions.

Join Pastor Brian, Rev Ryan, and members of St. Matthew who are attending Tuesday evening's presentation at Hartford International University (formerly Hartford Seminary). If you are interested in attending and would like to carpool please let one of the pastors know or call the church office. We will meet at St. Matthew 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday March 25 and plan to leave at 4:15 p.m. for the event.

EASTER LILY DEDICATIONS | \$22/each | Deadline: Sunday, April 6th

St. Matthew Altar Guild is starting to prepare the Easter lily order for this year. If you would like to purchase one in honor of a loved one, or for the glory of God, the cost will be \$22 each. Please contact the office by email, or phone: 860-673-3301. There will also be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Gathering Space.

SMLC ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

Sat., April 12 at 10:00 am

St. Matthew Lutheran Church's Annual Easter Egg Hunt will be on Saturday April 12th at 10 AM! Elementary aged children from across the Farmington Valley are invited to participate. This event takes place at the church - outside if the weather permits - and the whole Farmington Valley Community is invited, so bring your friends! There will be flyers in the Gathering Space so please take some to post around your town.

There will also be a sign-up sheet in the Gathering Space for anyone that can volunteer to either bring candy, help stuff the eggs for the event, or both! We're looking forward to this fun event!

THRIVENT ACTION TEAM SIGNUP

Thrivent Financial provides two action team cards of \$250 to members for charitable activities every year. If you are a Thrivent member you have access to this member benefit! We invite Thrivent members to check out the events list on the church bulletin board, and to sign your name next to an event you would like sponsor with a \$250 action team. We will help you with applying for the action team card if you do not know how. Thank you for your support of St. Matthew's ministry activities!