

## Stewardship 2026 Join the Journey

*"Trust in God from the bottom of your heart;  
don't try to figure out everything on your own.  
Listen for God's voice in everything you do,  
everywhere you go." Proverbs 3:4-6*



**WELCOME TO WORSHIP**  
**Sunday of the Passion**  
**March 29, 2026**  
**8:00 a.m. Traditional Worship**

**Pastor:** Paula Geister-Jones  
**Lay Ministry Administrator:** Jenny Hoffman  
**Organist/Pianist:** Linda Kunz  
**Acolyte:** Beckett Nelson  
**Lectors:** Bob Kluge & Sandy Grant  
**Ushers:** Jeffrey Morgan, Jerry Graffin, Jerry Buskager & Mark Holzhter  
**Technical Support:** Thomas Lehr

This coming week is a roller coaster of emotions from the highest of high to the lowest of lows. Today the crowd shouts "Hosanna! Blessed be God's King!" but on Friday the same people shout "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

**CALL TO WORSHIP: "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"**  
**Monk/Groth Hosanna Handbell Quartet**

*Stand*

### **PALM SUNDAY LITANY**

**P:** Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**C:** Hosanna to the Son of David.

**P:** The Lord be with you.

**C:** And also with you.

### **PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL: Matthew 21:1-11**

**Narrator:** When they neared Jerusalem, having arrived at Bethphage on Mount Olives, Jesus sent two disciples with these instructions: "Go over to

the village across from you. You'll find a donkey tethered there, her colt with her. Untie her and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you're doing, say, 'The Master needs them!' He will send them with you." This is the full story of what was sketched earlier by the prophet: tell Zion's daughter, "Look, your king's on his way, poised and ready, mounted on a donkey, on a colt, foal of a pack animal. <sup>6-9</sup>The disciples went and did exactly what Jesus told them to do. They led the donkey and colt out, laid some of their clothes on them, and Jesus mounted. Nearly all the people in the crowd threw their garments down on the road, giving him a royal welcome. Others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out,

**Crowds (All): Hosanna to David's son!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name! Hosanna in highest heaven!**

**Narrator:**<sup>10</sup> As he made his entrance into Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken. Unnerved, people were asking, "What's going on here? Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The parade crowd answered,

**Crowd (All): This is the prophet Jesus, the one from Nazareth in Galilee.**

**PROCESSIONAL SONG: "King of Kings"**

*The congregation is invited to walk around the sanctuary, waving their branches as they sing. This year we are keeping our palms, so after circling the sanctuary return to your seat.*

**King of kings and Lord of lords; Glory! Hallelujah! (2 times)**

**Jesus, Prince of Peace; Glory! Hallelujah! (2 times)**

*Remain Standing*

**GREETING:**

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

**C: And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P:** Let us pray.

**C: 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 in the glorious victory**

of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**HYMN: "Ah, Holy Jesus, How Have You Offended" #349 ELW Vss. 1, 2 & 4**

**Vs. 1: Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended  
that we to judge thee have in hate pretended?  
By foes derided, by thine own rejected,  
O most afflicted.**

**Vs. 2: Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?  
Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.  
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee;  
I crucified thee.**

**Vs. 4: For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation,  
thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation;  
thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion,  
for my salvation.**

*Sit*

**SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 26:14 – 30**

**Narrator:** That is when one of the Twelve, the one named Judas Iscariot, went to the cabal of high priests and said, "What will you give me if I hand him over to you?" They settled on thirty silver pieces. He began looking for just the right moment to hand him over. <sup>17</sup> On the first of the Days of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare your Passover meal?"

**Jesus (All): Enter the city. Go up to a certain man and say, 'The Teacher says, My time is near. I and my disciples plan to celebrate the Passover meal at your house.**

**Narrator:** The disciples followed Jesus' instructions to the letter, and prepared the Passover meal. After sunset, he and the Twelve were sitting around the table. During the meal, he said,

**Jesus (All): I have something hard but important to say to you: One of you is going to hand me over to the conspirators.**

**Narrator:** <sup>22</sup> They were stunned, and then began to ask, one after another, "It isn't me, is it, Master?"<sup>23-24</sup> Jesus answered,

**Jesus (All):** The one who hands me over is someone I eat with daily, one who passes me food at the table. In one sense the Son of Man is entering into a way of treachery well-marked by the Scriptures—no surprises here. In another sense that man who turns him in, turns traitor to the Son of Man—better never to have been born than do this!

**Narrator:** <sup>25</sup> Then Judas, already turned traitor, said, “It isn’t me, is it, Rabbi?”  
Jesus said,

**Jesus (All):** Don’t play games with me, Judas.

**Narrator:** <sup>26-29</sup> During the meal, Jesus took and blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples:

**Jesus (All):** Take, eat. This is my body.

**Narrator:** Taking the cup and thanking God, he gave it to them:

**Jesus (All):** Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, God’s new covenant poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins. I’ll not be drinking wine from this cup again until that new day when I’ll drink with you in the kingdom of my Father.

**Narrator:** <sup>30</sup> They sang a hymn and went directly to Mount Olives.

#### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION:**

**P:** All who are hungry, come! The feast of grace is spread. The body of Christ given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you.

#### **HOLY COMMUNION: “Remember Now, My Children”**

*While “Remember Now, My Children” is sung, people are invited to either commune in the pews or come forward to the communion railing, kneel and receive the bread and wine.*

**Vs. 1:** The night of his betrayal, our Lord took bread.  
He blest it as he broke it, and then he said,  
“My body broken for you, is what this means.  
Remember now, my children, what you have seen.

**Vs. 2:** And then he took the chalice and raised it high.  
“My blood is given for you, a full supply,  
a covenant, a promise, a cleansing stream.  
Remember now my children, what you have seen.

**Vs. 3:** We share this food together, remembering Christ,

**we share a common treasure and know the price,  
we share it without measure a gift of love,  
we share our life forever with God above.**

**COMMUNION BLESSING**

**P:** Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, † bless you now and always.

**C: Amen.**

**HYMN: “Go the Dark Gethsemane” #347 ELW vs. 1**

**Vs. 1: Go to dark Gethsemane,  
all who feel the tempter's pow'r;  
your Redeemer's conflict see.  
Watch with him one bitter hour;  
turn not from his griefs away;  
learn from Jesus Christ to pray.**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 26:31 – 56**

**Narrator:** <sup>1-32</sup> Then Jesus told them, “Before the night’s over, you’re going to fall to pieces because of what happens to me. There is a Scripture that says,

I’ll strike the shepherd; dazed and confused, the sheep will be scattered.

But after I am raised up, I, your Shepherd, will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee.” <sup>33</sup> Peter broke in,

**Peter (All): Even if everyone else falls to pieces on account of you, I won’t.**

**Narrator:** <sup>34</sup> “Don’t be so sure,” Jesus said. “This very night, before the rooster crows up the dawn, you will deny me three times.” <sup>35</sup> Peter protested,

**Peter (All): Even if I had to die with you, I would never deny you.**

**Narrator:** All the others said the same thing. <sup>36-38</sup> Then Jesus went with them to a garden called Gethsemane and told his disciples, “Stay here while I go over there and pray.” Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he plunged into an agonizing sorrow. Then he said, “This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me.” <sup>39</sup> Going a little ahead, he fell on his face, praying, “My Father, if there is any way, get me out of this. But please, not what I want. You, what do *you* want?” <sup>40-41</sup> When he came back to his disciples, he found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, “Can’t you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert; be in prayer so you don’t

wander into temptation without even knowing you're in danger. There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But there's another part that's as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire." <sup>42</sup> He then left them a second time. Again he prayed, "My Father, if there is no other way than this, drinking this cup to the dregs, I'm ready. Do it your way. "When he came back, he again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open. This time he let them sleep on, and went back a third time to pray, going over the same ground one last time. <sup>45-46</sup> When he came back the next time, he said, "Are you going to sleep on and make a night of it? My time is up, the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the hands of sinners. Get up! Let's get going! My betrayer is here" <sup>47-49</sup> The words were barely out of his mouth when Judas (the one from the Twelve) showed up, and with him a gang from the high priests and religious leaders Judas brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a sign with them:

**Judas (All): The one I kiss, that's the one—seize him.**

**Narrator:** He went straight to Jesus, greeted him, "How are you, Rabbi?" and kissed him. <sup>50-51</sup> Jesus said, "Friend, why this charade?" Then they came on him—grabbed him and roughed him up. One of those with Jesus pulled his sword and, taking a swing at the Chief Priest's servant, cut off his ear. <sup>52-54</sup> Jesus said, "Put your sword back where it belongs. All who use swords are destroyed by swords. Don't you realize that I am able right now to call to my Father, and twelve companies—more, if I want them—of fighting angels would be here, battle-ready? But if I did that, how would the Scriptures come true that say this is the way it has to be?" <sup>55-56</sup> Then Jesus addressed the mob: "What is this—coming out after me with swords and clubs as if I were a dangerous criminal? Day after day I have been sitting in the Temple teaching, and you never so much as lifted a hand against me. You've done it this way to confirm and fulfill the prophetic writings." Then all the disciples cut and ran.

**HYMN: Go to Dark Gethsemane" #347 ELW vs. 2**

**Vs. 2: Follow to the judgment hall,  
view the Lord of life arraigned;  
oh, the wormwood and the gall!  
Oh, the pangs his soul sustained!  
Shun not suff'ring, shame, or loss;**

**learn from him to bear the cross.**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 26:57- 75**

**Narrator:** <sup>57-58</sup> The gang that had seized Jesus led him before Caiaphas the Chief Priest, where the religion scholars and leaders had assembled. Peter followed at a safe distance until they got to the Chief Priest's courtyard. Then he slipped in and mingled with the servants, watching to see how things would turn out. <sup>59-60</sup> The high priests, conspiring with the Jewish Council, tried to cook up charges against Jesus in order to sentence him to death. But even though many stepped up, making up one false accusation after another, nothing was believable. <sup>60-61</sup> Finally two men came forward with this:

**Two Men (All): He said, 'I can tear down this Temple of God and after three days rebuild it.'**

**Narrator:** <sup>62</sup> The Chief Priest stood up and said,

**Chief Priest (All): What do you have to say to the accusation?**

**Narrator:** <sup>63</sup> Jesus kept silent. Then the Chief Priest said,

**Chief Priest (All): I command you by the authority of the living God to say if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.**

**Narrator:** <sup>64</sup> Jesus was curt: "You yourself said it. And that's not all. Soon you'll see it for yourself: The Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Mighty One, arriving on the clouds of heaven." <sup>65-66</sup> At that, the Chief Priest lost his temper, ripping his robes, yelling,

**Chief Priest (All): He blasphemed! Why do we need witnesses to accuse him? You all heard him blaspheme! Are you going to stand for such blasphemy?**

**Narrator:** They all said,

**Religion Leaders and Leaders (All): Death! That seals his death sentence.**

**Narrator:** <sup>67-68</sup> Then they were spitting in his face and knocking him around. They jeered as they slapped him:

**Religion Leaders and Leaders (All): Prophecy, Messiah: Who hit you that time?**

**Narrator:** <sup>69</sup> All this time, Peter was sitting out in the courtyard. One servant girl came up to him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean." <sup>70</sup> In front of everybody there, he denied it.

**Peter (All): I don't know what you're talking about.**

**Narrator:** <sup>71</sup> As he moved over toward the gate, someone else said to the people there, “This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.” <sup>72</sup> Again he denied it, salting his denial with an oath:

**Peter (All): I swear, I never laid eyes on the man.**

**Narrator:** <sup>73</sup> Shortly after that, some bystanders approached Peter. “You’ve got to be one of them. Your accent gives you away.” <sup>74-75</sup> Then he got really nervous and swore.

**Peter (All): I don’t know the man!**

**Narrator:** Just then a rooster crowed. Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” He went out and cried and cried and cried.

## HOMILY

**HYMN: “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed” #337 ELW Vss. 1-3**

**Vs. 1: Alas! And did my Savior bleed,  
and did my sov'reign die?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
for sinners such as I?**

**Vs. 2: Was it for sins that I had done  
he groaned upon the tree?  
Amazing pity, grace unknown,  
and love beyond degree!**

**Vs. 3: Well might the sun in darkness hide  
and shut its glories in  
when God, the mighty maker, died  
for his own creatures' sin.**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27: 1- 10**

**Narrator:** In the first light of dawn, all the high priests and religious leaders met and put the finishing touches on their plot to kill Jesus. Then they tied him up and paraded him to Pilate, the governor. <sup>3-4</sup> Judas, the one who betrayed him, realized that Jesus was doomed. Overcome with remorse, he gave back the thirty silver coins to the high priests, saying,

**Judas (All): I’ve sinned. I’ve betrayed an innocent man.**

**Narrator:** They said, “What do we care? That’s *your* problem!”<sup>5</sup> Judas threw the silver coins into the Temple and left. Then he went out and hung himself.<sup>6-10</sup> The high priests picked up the silver pieces but then didn’t know what to do with them. “It wouldn’t be right to give this—a payment for murder!—as an offering in the Temple.” They decided to get rid of it by buying the “Potter’s Field” and use it as a burial place for the homeless. That’s how the field got called “Murder Meadow,” a name that has stuck to this day. Then Jeremiah’s words became history: they took the thirty silver pieces, the price of the one priced by some sons of Israel, and they purchased the potter’s field. And so they unwittingly followed the divine instructions to the letter.

*Stand*

### **APOSTLES CREED**

**P:** Do you believe in God the Father?

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

**P:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**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.**

**P:** Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**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.**

**OFFERING: “Ride On to Die” by Card – Kyla Betts solo**

### **SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:11-26**

**Narrator:** <sup>11</sup> Jesus was placed before the governor, who questioned him: “Are you the ‘King of the Jews’?” Jesus said, “If you say so.” <sup>12-14</sup> But when the accusations rained down hot and heavy from the high priests and religious leaders, he said nothing. Pilate asked him, “Do you hear that long list of accusations? Aren’t you going to say something?” Jesus kept silence—not a word from his mouth. The governor was impressed, really impressed.

<sup>15-18</sup> It was an old custom during the Feast for the governor to pardon a single prisoner named by the crowd. At the time, they had the infamous Jesus Barabbas in prison. With the crowd before him, Pilate said, “Which prisoner do you want me to pardon: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus the so-called Christ?” He knew it was through sheer spite that they had turned Jesus over to him.

<sup>19</sup> While court was still in session, Pilate’s wife sent him a message: “Don’t get mixed up in judging this noble man. I’ve just been through a long and troubled night because of a dream about him.”

<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the high priests and religious leaders had talked the crowd into asking for the pardon of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus.

<sup>21</sup> The governor asked, “Which of the two do you want me to pardon?” They said,

**Crowd (All): Barabbas!**

**Narrator:** <sup>22</sup> “Then what do I do with Jesus, the so-called Christ?” They all shouted,

**Crowd (All): Nail him to a cross!**

**Narrator:** <sup>23</sup> He objected, “But for what crime?” But they yelled all the louder,

**Crowd (All): Nail him to a cross!**

**Narrator:** <sup>24</sup> When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was imminent, he took a basin of water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd, saying, “I’m washing my hands of responsibility for this man’s death. From now on, it’s in your hands. You’re judge and jury.” <sup>25</sup> The crowd answered,

**Crowd (All): We’ll take the blame, we and our children after us.**

**Narrator:** <sup>26</sup> Then he pardoned Barabbas. But he had Jesus whipped, and then handed over for crucifixion.

**HYMN: Go to Dark Gethsemane” #347 ELW vs. 3**

**Vs. 3: Calv'ry's mournful mountain climb;  
there, adoring at his feet,  
mark that miracle of time,  
God's own sacrifice complete.  
"It is finished!" hear him cry;  
learn from Jesus Christ to die.**

**SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:27-56**

**Narrator:** <sup>27-31</sup> The soldiers assigned to the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace and got the entire brigade together for some fun. They stripped him and dressed him in a red robe. They plaited a crown from branches of a thornbush and set it on his head. They put a stick in his right hand for a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mocking reverence:

**Roman Guards (All): Bravo, King of the Jews!**

**Narrator:** Then they spit on him and hit him on the head with the stick. When they had had their fun, they took off the robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they proceeded out to the crucifixion. <sup>32-34</sup> Along the way they came on a man from Cyrene named Simon and made him carry Jesus' cross. Arriving at Golgotha, the place they call "Skull Hill," they offered him a mild painkiller (a mixture of wine and myrrh), but when he tasted it he wouldn't drink it. <sup>35-40</sup> After they had finished nailing him to the cross and were waiting for him to die, they killed time by throwing dice for his clothes. Above his head they had posted the criminal charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Along with him, they also crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament:

**People Passing By (All): You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!**

**Narrator:** <sup>41-44</sup> The high priests, along with the religion scholars and leaders, were right there mixing it up with the rest of them, having a great time poking fun at him:

**High Priests and Religious Leaders (All): He saved others—he can't save himself! King of Israel, is he? Then let him get down from that cross. We'll all become believers then! He was so sure of God—well, let him**

**rescue his ‘Son’ now—if he wants him! He did claim to be God’s Son, didn’t he?**

**Narrator:** Even the two criminals crucified next to him joined in the mockery.

<sup>45-46</sup> From noon to three, the whole earth was dark. Around mid-afternoon Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” <sup>47-49</sup> Some bystanders who heard him said,

**Bystanders (All): He’s calling for Elijah.**

**Narrator:** One of them ran and got a sponge soaked in sour wine and lifted it on a stick so he could drink. The others joked,

**Other Bystanders (All): Don’t be in such a hurry. Let’s see if Elijah comes and saves him.**

**Narrator:** <sup>50</sup> But Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last. <sup>51-53</sup> At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. What’s more, tombs were opened up, and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised. (After Jesus’ resurrection, they left the tombs, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.) <sup>54</sup> The captain of the guard and those with him, when they saw the earthquake and everything else that was happening, were scared to death. They said,

**Roman Guard (All): This has to be the Son of God!**

**Narrator:** <sup>55-56</sup> There were also quite a few women watching from a distance, women who had followed Jesus from Galilee in order to serve him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the Zebedee brothers.

**HYMN: “They Crucified My Lord” #350 ELW Vss. 1-3**

**Vs. 1: They crucified my Lord,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;  
they crucified my Lord,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;  
not a word, not a word, not a word.**

**Vs. 2: They nailed him to a tree,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;  
they nailed him to a tree,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;**

**not a word, not a word, not a word.**

**Vs. 3: They pierced him in the side,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;  
they pierced him in the side,  
and he never said a mumbalin' word;  
not a word, not a word, not a word.**

## **ANNOUCEMENTS**

*Stand*

## **BENEDICTION**

**P:** God, the giver of love, †Christ, the resurrection and the life, and the Holy Spirit of rebirth bless you in this Lenten journey.

**C: Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

**P:** Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE: “Were You There?” set by Wold**