

**GATHERING**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

We come to God, looking for holy hope in the midst of the world's hopelessness.

*(Silence is kept for reflection.)*

God of hope, **we confess that we often place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts, rather than relying on you. We make our own plans, instead of trusting the leading of your Spirit. We too often want to be in control, instead of having faith in your wisdom and love. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may bring your hope to everyone. Amen.**

Beloved of God, by divine mercy we have peace with God through Christ Jesus. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope, for hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**Gathering Song "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" ELW 597 (Spoken)**

1. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

*Refrain:* On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace; in ev'ry high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the veil. *Refrain*

3. His oath, his covenant, his blood sustain me in the raging flood; when all supports are washed away, he then is all my hope and stay. *Refrain*

4. When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in him be found, clothed in his righteousness alone, redeemed to stand before the throne! *Refrain*

Text: Edward Mote, 1797-1874, alt. Public Domain

**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.**

**Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray...**O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

**WORD First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

<sup>2</sup>Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.

<sup>3</sup>For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

<sup>4</sup>Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.



### **First Reading: Isaiah 51:1-6 (CONTINUED)**

<sup>5</sup>I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.

<sup>6</sup>Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm: Psalm 138 (Read Responsively)**

<sup>1</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise.

<sup>2</sup>**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.**

<sup>3</sup>When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.

<sup>4</sup>**All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD, when they have heard the words of your mouth.**

<sup>5</sup>They will sing of the ways of the LORD, that great is the glory of the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>**The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar.**

<sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me.

<sup>8</sup>**You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.**

### **Second Reading: Romans 12:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20**

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup>And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup>I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup>Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

Grace and peace, from our Lord Jesus, who calls us to faith.

If actions speak louder than words, then I have to admit that most of my actions don't show that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. More often, my actions point to Jesus as a good man—a great man, even, an example to follow, someone to be inspired by.

For most of us, there is a gap between the words we say on Sunday and the lives we lead the rest of the week. Most of us would like the words we say on Sunday to actually matter everyday. Maybe the question Jesus asks isn't just for Peter and the disciples. Maybe Jesus also asks us. Who do you say Jesus is? Not just what's in the Creed, but what does your life say? your relationships, your bank account, time, and all the rest. Who do you really say Jesus is?

What do we actually mean when we say, with Peter, that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of the Living God? Or that Jesus is Lord. Or, like the Nicene Creed, that Jesus is sired by God, not just made by God. The creeds can make it hard to find our own words that ring true in our lives. Peter probably didn't understand what he said, either. He had to live into those words, just like we do.

"Safe" words of any standard confession of faith tend to "tame" Jesus. They keep the wild, unpredictable God of love and grace at arms' length. Jesus is inspiring, someone worth following, but we tend to make Jesus safe, not really wanting Jesus to rock our lives. When we do that, we keep the power of Jesus at a safe distance. How can we shake loose from that?

How would you describe Jesus to someone who never heard of him before? To a friend or stranger who happened to ask you about Jesus. I think Jesus is God's way of showing us how much God loves us and all people. God is so holy that we have a hard time connecting with God. So God came to be like one of us, to live like one of us, to show us how God feels about us.

Jesus revealed God's heart—a heart that aches with all who suffer depression and think seriously about ending their lives, a heart that is upset and angry when we turn away from people who are outside our normal experience— someone with a different skin color, different gender, or any kind of disability or disease. God's heart loves us like only an adoring parent can, so God wants the best for us, but is always eager to welcome us with forgiveness, grace, and love.

But it's more than that, too. I think Jesus also came to show us what's possible. So rather than give in to disease, Jesus healed. Rather than surrender people to demons, Jesus showed compassion. Rather than let people starve, Jesus fed all who were hungry. Jesus refused to be held to normal limits and invites us to do the same, because if Jesus' life and death show us how much God loves us, Jesus' resurrection shows us that God's love is more powerful than hate and fear and even death. Jesus shows us that God's love wins.

When I talk about Jesus in my own words—that can help me see all of my life— my time, my relationships, my hopes and dreams, my finances, and all the rest— through the lens of the power and possibilities created by seeing God's heart through the life of Jesus.

I invite you, this week, to come up with a sentence or two that describe what you believe about Jesus, and let that vision of your Lord shape your life this week. Because, I don't think Jesus asks us to confess who we believe he is for his sake. Jesus wants this for our own sake, so we might be caught in the power of his love. What we say about Jesus aren't words of praise for God, but words of power that help root us in the love and possibility that Jesus offers.

As you ponder who Jesus is, may the words God brings to your mind shape every part of your life. Amen

## 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.

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## Prayers of Intercession

L: Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

L: Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#1. You call forth praises from the far reaches of the universe to the smallest of creatures. Join our songs to theirs, that a spirit of praise and thanksgiving will arouse us to cherish this wondrous home you give us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#2. All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord. Direct the leaders of countries, legislators and magistrates, mayors and councils, to walk in your ways. Help leaders regard those in need with mercy and fulfill your loving purposes in the governance of peoples. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#3. You call us into our communities, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

#4. God of hope, give good courage to all the people of Northwoods STaR Ministries, that we may go wherever you call us, to be the people you created us to be. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

L: Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care. We especially pray for all those on the prayer list — Mary, Scott, Florence, Betty, Arland, Phil & Janice, Dorothy, Ben M., Evelina, Renee, Joe, Isaiah, Gerald, Jason, Dusty, Kay, everyone with COVID-19 \_\_\_\_\_ and all those we name before you now, out loud or in our hearts. *(pause)*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*(Other prayers added here)*

L: In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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## THANKSGIVING

**Offering** (The offering plates will be placed near the sanctuary entrances. Please place your offerings in those containers as you exit the worship service today. Thank you.)

### Offering prayer

Let us pray...**God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. Water and word, wine and bread: these are signs of your abundant grace. Nourish us through these gifts, that we might proclaim your steadfast love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.**

## SENDING

### Announcements

### Blessing

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

### Sending Hymn "Christ, Be Our Light" ELW 715

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you. Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.

#### Refrain:

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair. Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice. *Refrain*

3. Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst. Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed. *Refrain*

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless. Longing for warmth, many are cold. Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone. *Refrain*

5. Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong. Let us be servants to one another, signs of your kingdom come. *Refrain*

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## Mission Statements

### Northwoods STaR Ministries

*"United in Christ, Sharing God's Love"*

### Zion Brantwood

*"We are disciples of Christ: Growing in faith, sharing our faith stories, serving others."*

### First Prentice

*"We are Jesus' disciples: Welcoming every sinner, sharing Jesus' love and teachings, encouraging all to live Christ-centered lives."*

### First Ogema

*"We are called and gathered to share Christ as we minister to all, bringing an unchanging God to a changing world."*

### First Westboro

*"Feeding bodies, minds and spirits through Christ."*

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**