Sermon

September 27, 2026
The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost:
Proper 21



The Holy Eucharist:
The Liturgy for the Proclamation of the Word of God and Celebration of the Holy Communion

Gloria Dei Episcopal Church
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The Liturgy of the Word

Blessed are you, holy and living One.
You come to your people and set them free.

***Hymn of Praise*: The Hymnal, 1982 # 450**

1 All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all!

2 Crown him ye martyrs of our God,
who from his altar call:
praise him whose way of pain ye trod, and crown him…

3 Hail him, the Heir of David's line,
whom David Lord did call,
the God incarnate, Man divine, and crown him Lord of all!

4 Ye heirs of Israel's chosen race, ye ransomed of the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him…

5 Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
the wormwood and the gall,
go, spread your trophies at his feet, and crown him…

6 Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball,
to him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all.

Collect of the Day

O God, you declare your almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to obtain your promises, may become partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

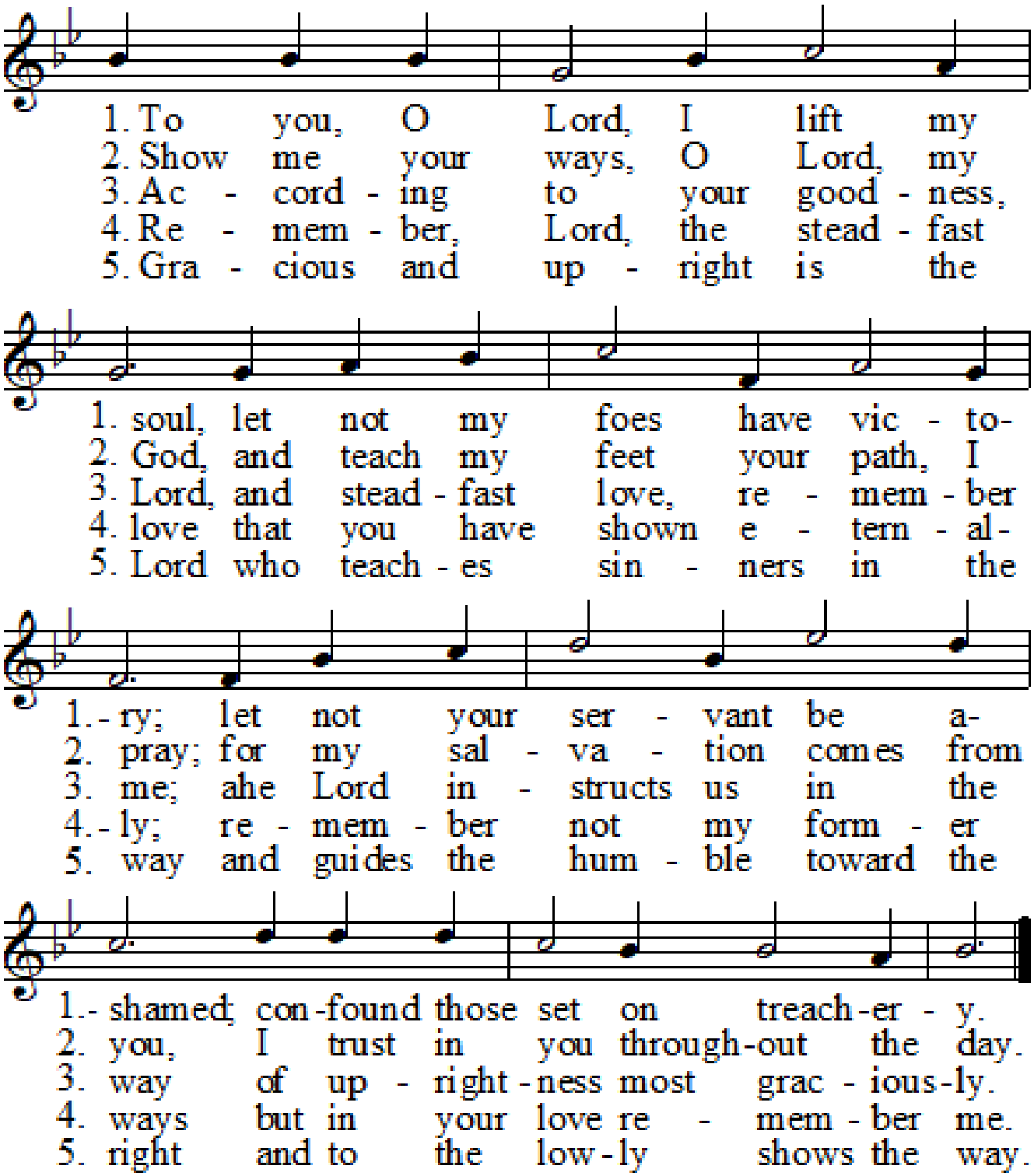
The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

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

Gradual Psalm 25:1-8 *(Organ only-- Slight variation in melody; extra verse)*



This is the song of the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians:

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death--
even death on a cross.

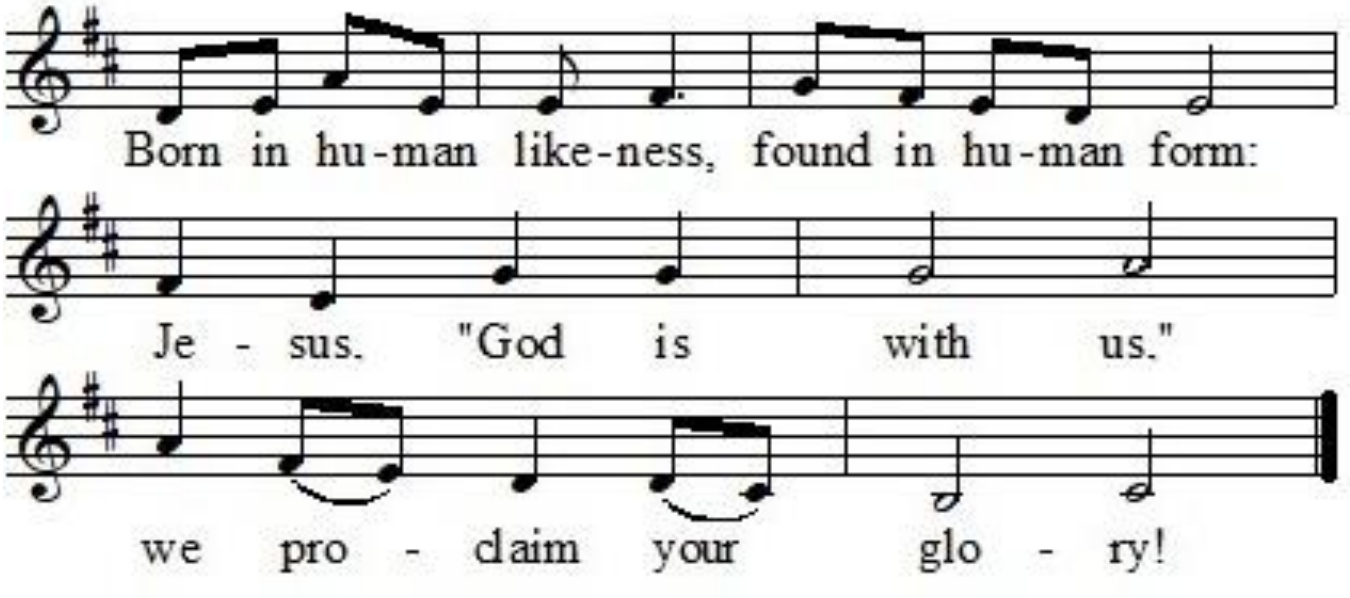
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

>>>>>>>

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people of God.
Thanks be to God.

Sequence Hymn:



The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ
according to St. Matthew: ***Glory to you, Lord Christ.***

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” *(Over)*

So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

The Gospel of the Lord. ***Praise to you, Lord Christ.***

The Sermon

Lead us in your truth and teach us, O God of our salvation, so we may discover the path of true obedience and follow you with heart and mind and will. +

“By what authority are you doing these things?”

A legitimate question, legitimately raised by the chief priests and the elders of the people.

By what authority do you tell stories that seem to advocate patently unfair labor practices?

By what authority do you court the wrath of Rome upon our people with your parody of the triumphal entry of military heroes into the city?

By what authority do you disrupt the worship of the Temple?

By what authority do you go around cursing fig trees for no good reason? What was that all about, anyway?

OK, Jesus responds,…By what authority did John call people to repentance and baptize for the forgiveness of sins?

By what authority did John challenge Herod for his incestuous marriage?

The Chief Priests and the elders of the people found themselves between a rock and a hard place when Jesus turned their question of authority around on them. Matthew tells us that they knew that if they attributed John’s authority to God, Jesus would want to know why they had not heeded John’s warnings and borne fruit that befits repentance. On the other hand, they knew that John the Baptist enjoyed all the popularity of a martyr. Dead prophets are the stuff of legend, and the legend grows with time.

At the same time, the Temple authorities were the local manifestation of the power of Empire, the official liaison between the subject people and Rome. Their unpopularity with the common people on that score was only enhanced by the fact that they were handsomely compensated, financially as well as in terms of the power inherent in their position.

Jesus knew that, when he turned the question of John's authority on them, and he did less than nothing to make that burden easier on them. To acknowledge John as a prophet would be to legitimize his challenge to Empire, and specifically to Herod and Herodia.

To attribute John's popularity to human factors only would intensify the resentment of the crowds.

And, I suspect, there were at least a few of them who, when they told Jesus they didn't know where John's authority came from, they really weren't sure. Though John called them a brood of vipers, they do seem to have turned out in force on the banks of the Jordan when John first came on the scene. It's possible that some of them actually took John's call to repentance to heart, and found hope in John's promise of one to come after, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The scribes and Pharisees are usually depicted as a monolithic opposition force, but I wonder if maybe some of them were, at least secretly curious about Jesus, attracted to him, and open to the possibilities of the reign of God. We know of at least one Pharisee who sought Jesus out, though, like the indecisive leaders who confronted Jesus in today's story, Nicodemus showed up under cover of darkness. But I think he really did want to know what Jesus had to teach him.

Are there those among us today who feel the urgings of the Spirit, telling them to challenge tried and true assumptions and approaches, to speak God's truth to power, but who lack the clarity of mind to arrive at decisions for the kingdom, or the courage to follow through on them?

Jesus' response to the challenge to his authority is twofold. First, he appeals to John the Baptist, the link between the Old Testament and the new, who came, in fulfillment of prophecy, to make the valleys high, the mountains low, the crooked straight and rough places smooth, to prepare the way of the Lord. To proclaim the coming of one greater, in whom the glory of the Lord would, indeed, be revealed, in plain view where all flesh can see it together.

Then he tells a story about two children of a vineyard owner, both of whom are sent to do their share of the necessary work. One refuses but goes, the other agrees but does not follow through.

Which does the will of the father? The one who talks the talk or the one who walks the walk? The one who states his beliefs correctly, or the one who lives by them?

Today's Gospel is paired with St. Paul's famous hymn to the obedience of Jesus in the second chapter of Philippians. It is from his sacrificial obedience that the authority of Jesus is derived. One in being with the Father, he did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped or exploited—the Greek word carries both meanings. Rather, in humility and obedience, he took not only human form, but the form of a slave, and became obedient to the point of death—the form of death prescribed for a slave— crucifixion. Therefore God exalted him, giving him victory over death on the third day

and making him both Lord and Christ, so that at the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The eternal Word, co-existent with God from eternity, without whom nothing in Creation came into being, pitched his tent of human flesh and, in that tent, lived among us. And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

That eternal Word was lifted up, that he might draw the whole world to himself.

That incarnate Word marched into Jerusalem on the back of an unbroken donkey, using the trappings of empire to demonstrate that all power and authority belongs to God.

That incarnate Word drove from God's house those who were there solely to profit from a cultic system rooted in Scripture but coated with layer upon layer of human accretions. God's house was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations.

That incarnate Word cursed a fig tree and then told a story, teaching us that discipleship is not just a matter of intention or of intellectual assent to a concept, but a way of life. As a vine, or a fig tree for that matter, draws nutrients from the air and soil and produces fruit, so we are to draw power from the Holy Spirit and produce the fruits of the Spirit that St. Paul enumerates in Galatians 5 (:22b-23a): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness self-control.

That incarnate Word came to earth and lived among us, demonstrating the way of God, the way of infinite love, in every human context. He came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life to liberate us all.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

The Nicene Creed

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:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
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.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He 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 the People

Brothers and sisters, in humility regard
others :as better than yourselves.
Humbly then, let us approach our God, saying,
"To will and work for your good Pleasure,
O Lord, enable us."

Christ Jesus, strengthen our tongues
to declare you as Lord of our lives.
May we, your Church,
glorify your Heavenly Parent in word and deed.

To will and work for your good pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

Christ Jesus, you chose not to exploit your equality
with God, but humbled yourself to be with us.
Give us your heart for the marginalized and poor. And may all people, especially those in power.
follow your example of humility.

To will and work for your good Pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

Christ Jesus, by your birth in human likeness
yon blessed all of creation.
Remind us that your feet have trod our soil
and tasted our waters.
Give us the will rocare fur this precious planer.

To will and work for your good Pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

Christ Jesus, you rule the world
with love and compassion.
Give to our local leaders compassion and
vision that the people of our region might
live as neighbors, looking out for each other's interests.

To will and work for your good Pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

Christ Jesus, you became obedient to the point of
death that we might have abundant life.
Work marvels in the lives of the sick and sorrowful.
May they recount to generations
the wonderful deeds you have done in their lives.

To will and work for your good pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

Christ Jesus, through death and resurrection
you were highly exalted by God.
Continue your good work
in those who now rest from their labors.
May all the dead find new and lasting life in you.

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To will and work for your good pleasure,
O Lord, enable us.

O Lord, your mercy endures forever. Hear the prayers of your people. And grant us the strength and courage to walk in your ways all the days of our lives. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

Confession of Sin:

Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.

The absolution

The Peace

The Liturgy for the
Celebration of Holy Communion

The Offertory

The Celebrant begins the Offertory with a sentence of Scripture. Offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts, are presented and placed on the Altar.

Offertory Hymn: ***The Hymnal, 1982, # 337***

1 And now, O Father, mindful of the love
that bought us, once for all, on Calvary's tree,
and having with us him that pleads above,
we here present, we here spread forth to thee,
that only offering perfect in thine eyes,
the one true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

2 Look Father, look on his anointed face,
and only look on us as found in him;
look not on our misusings of thy grace,
our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim:
for lo! between our sins and their reward,
we set the passion of thy Son our Lord.

3 And then for those, our dearest and our best,
by this prevailing presence we appeal;
O fold them closer to thy mercy's breast!
O do thine utmost for their souls' true weal!
From tainting mischief keep them pure and clear,
and crown thy gifts with strength to persevere.

4 And so we come; O draw us to thy feet,
most patient Savior, who canst love us still!
And by this food, so awesome and so sweet,
deliver us from every touch of ill:
in thine own service make us glad and free,
and grant us nevermore to part from thee.

The Great Thanksgiving: Eucharistic Prayer C

May God 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.

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

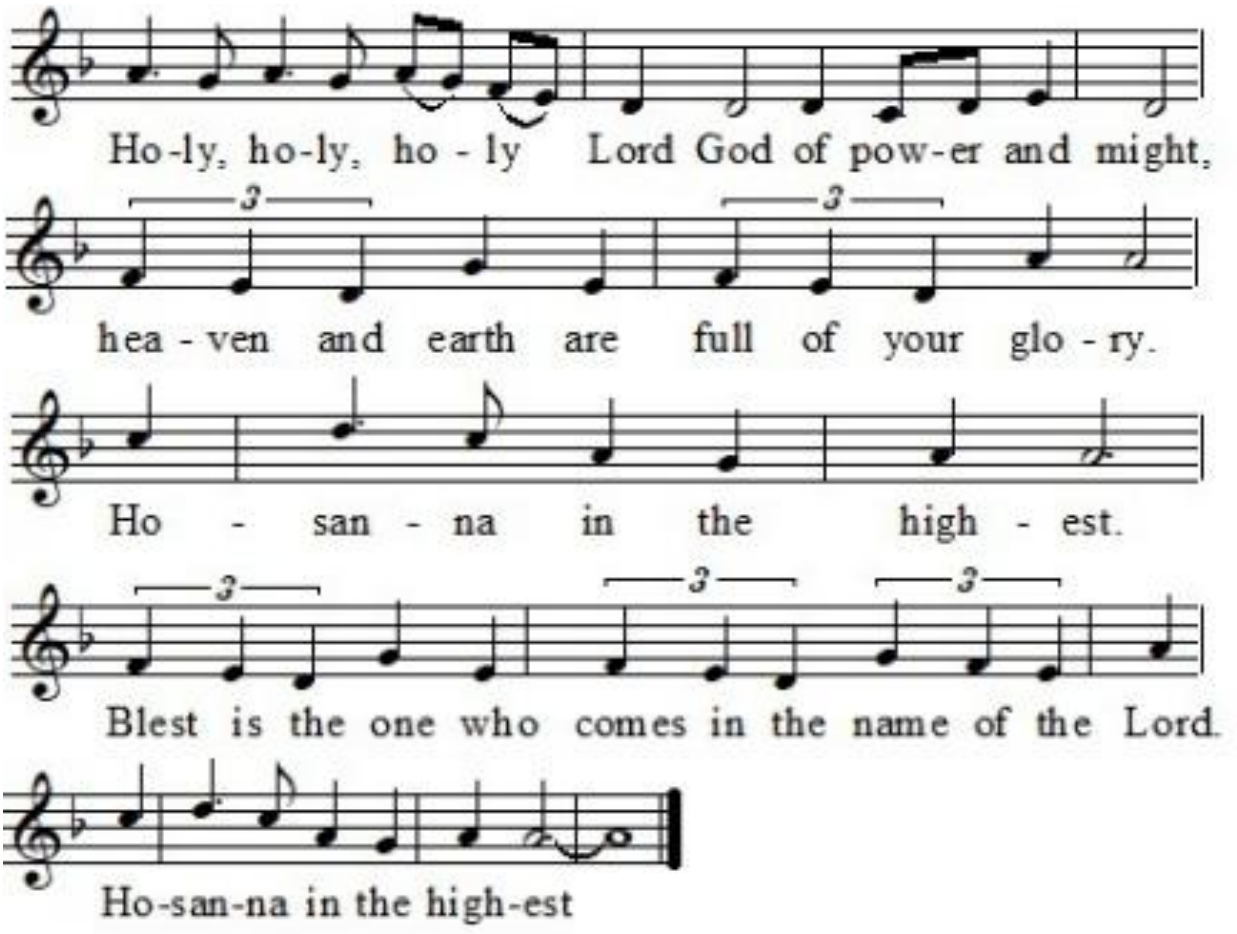
God of all power, Source and Sustainer of the Universe,
you are worthy of glory and praise.
Glory to you for ever and ever.

At your command all things came to be:
shining light and enfolding dark;
the vast expanse of interstellar space,
galaxies, suns, and this fragile earth, our island home.
By your will they were created and have their being.

From the primal elements
you brought forth the human race,
and blessed us with the capacity
for memory, reason, and skill.
You made us the stewards of your creation.
But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust;
and we turned against one another.
Have mercy, Lord, for we are sinners in your sight.

Again and again, you called us to return.
Through prophets and sages
you revealed your righteous Law.
And in the fullness of time you sent your eternal Word,
born of your servant Mary, to fulfill your Law,
opening for us the way of freedom and peace.
By his blood, he reconciled us.
By his wounds, we are healed.

And therefore we praise you,
joining with the heavenly chorus,
with prophets, apostles, and martyrs,
and with all those in every generation
who have looked to you in hope,
to proclaim with them your glory,
in their unending hymn:



At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it, or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread,
said the blessing, broke the bread,
and gave it to his friends, and said,
"Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and said,
"Drink this, all of you:
This is my Blood of the new Covenant,
which is shed for you and for all
for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
do this for the remembrance of me."

Remembering now his work of redemption
and offering to you this sacrifice of thanksgiving,
We celebrate Christ's death and resurrection
as we await the day of his coming.

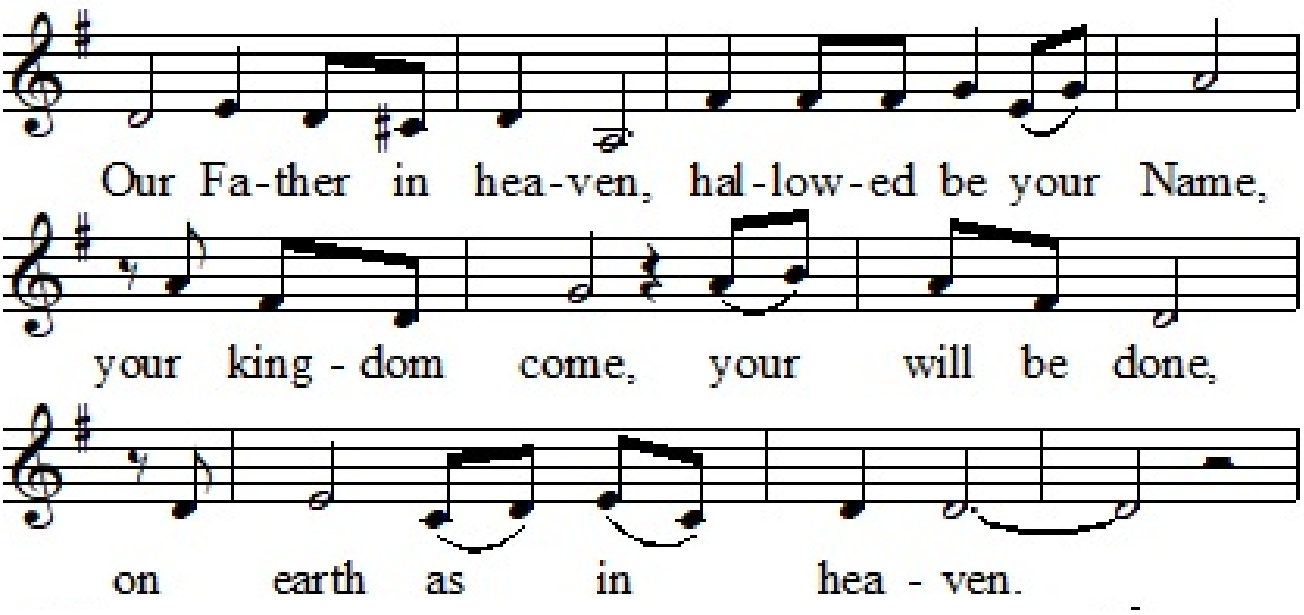
Therefore, O God,
we who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ,
and made a new people by water and the Spirit,
now bring before you these gifts.
Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit
to be the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Savior.

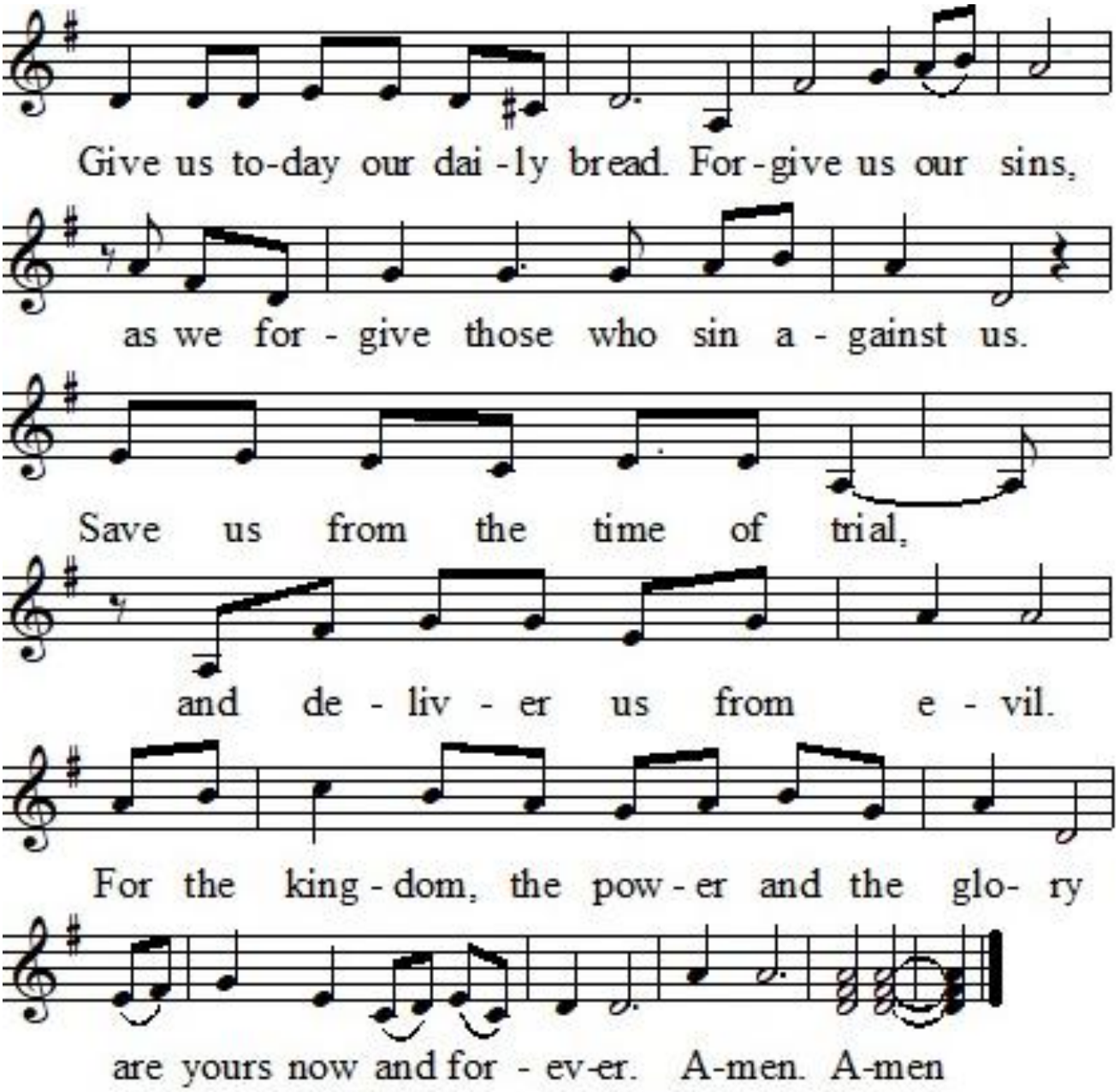
Sanctify us also,
and let the grace of this Holy Communion
make us one body, one spirit in Christ,
that we may worthily serve the world in his name.
Risen Lord, be known to us in the breaking of the Bread.

God of our ancestors; Redeemer and Mother of Israel;
God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:
Open our eyes to see your hand at work
in the world about us.
Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table
for solace only and not for strength;
for pardon only and not for renewal.

Accept these prayers and praises, Almighty God,
through Jesus Christ our great High Priest, to whom,
with you and the Holy Spirit,
your Church gives honor, glory, and worship,
from generation to generation. AMEN.

Aso our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,





The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread

A period of silence is kept.

Alleluia! ***Alleluia***!

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world and all who dwell therein.
For it is he who founded it upon the seas
and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

Alleluia! ***Alleluia***!

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

Communion Hymn: ***The Hymnal, 1982, # 332***

1 O God, unseen yet ever near, thy presence may we feel;
and thus inspired with holy fear, before thine altar kneel.

2 Here may thy faithful people know
the blessings of thy love,
the streams that through the desert flow,
the manna from above.

3 We come, obedient to thy word, to feast on heavenly food;
our meat the Body of the Lord,
our drink his precious Blood.

4 Thus may we all thy word obey, for we, O God, are thine;
and go rejoicing on our way, renewed with strength divine.

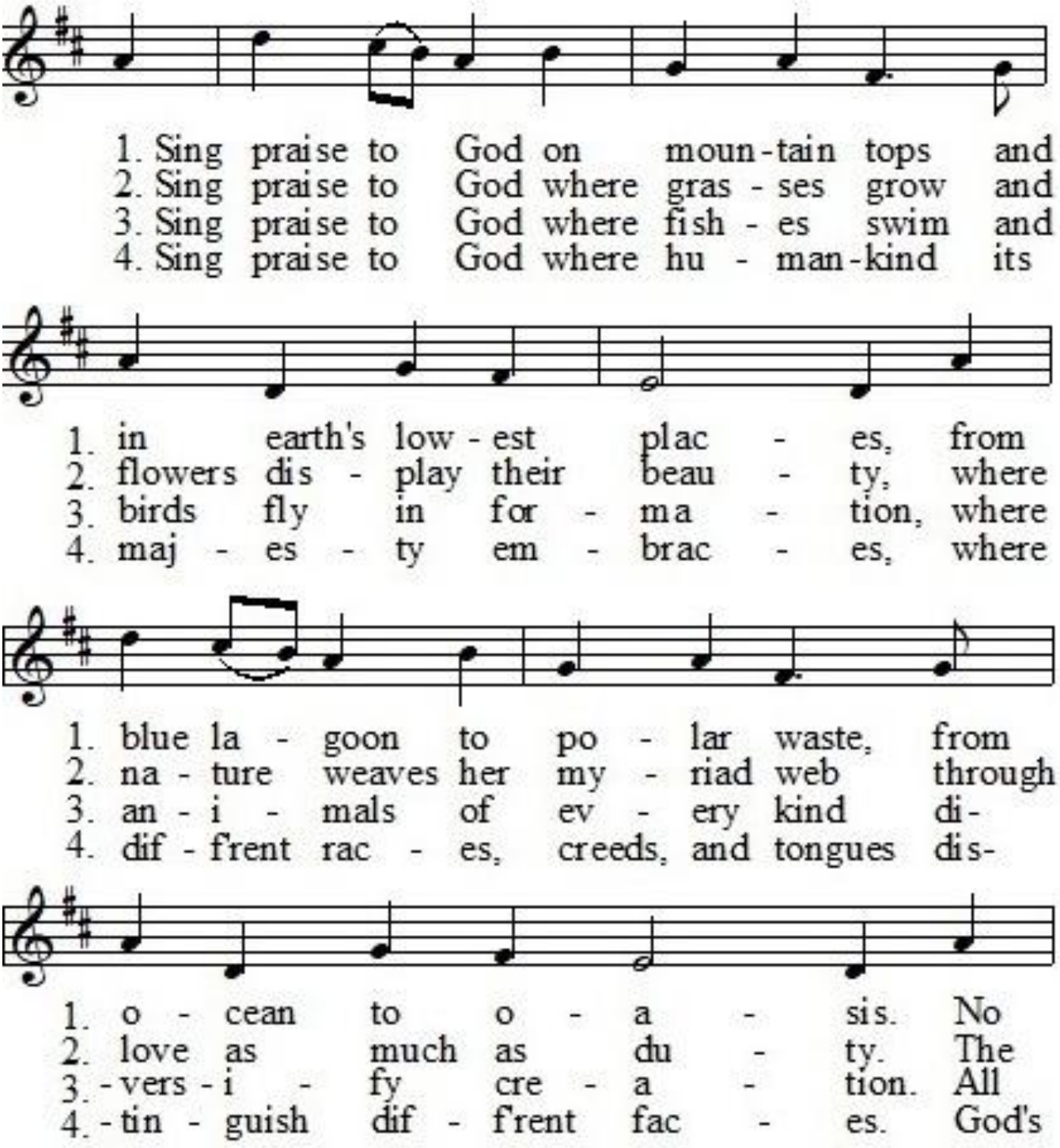
Post-communion Prayer

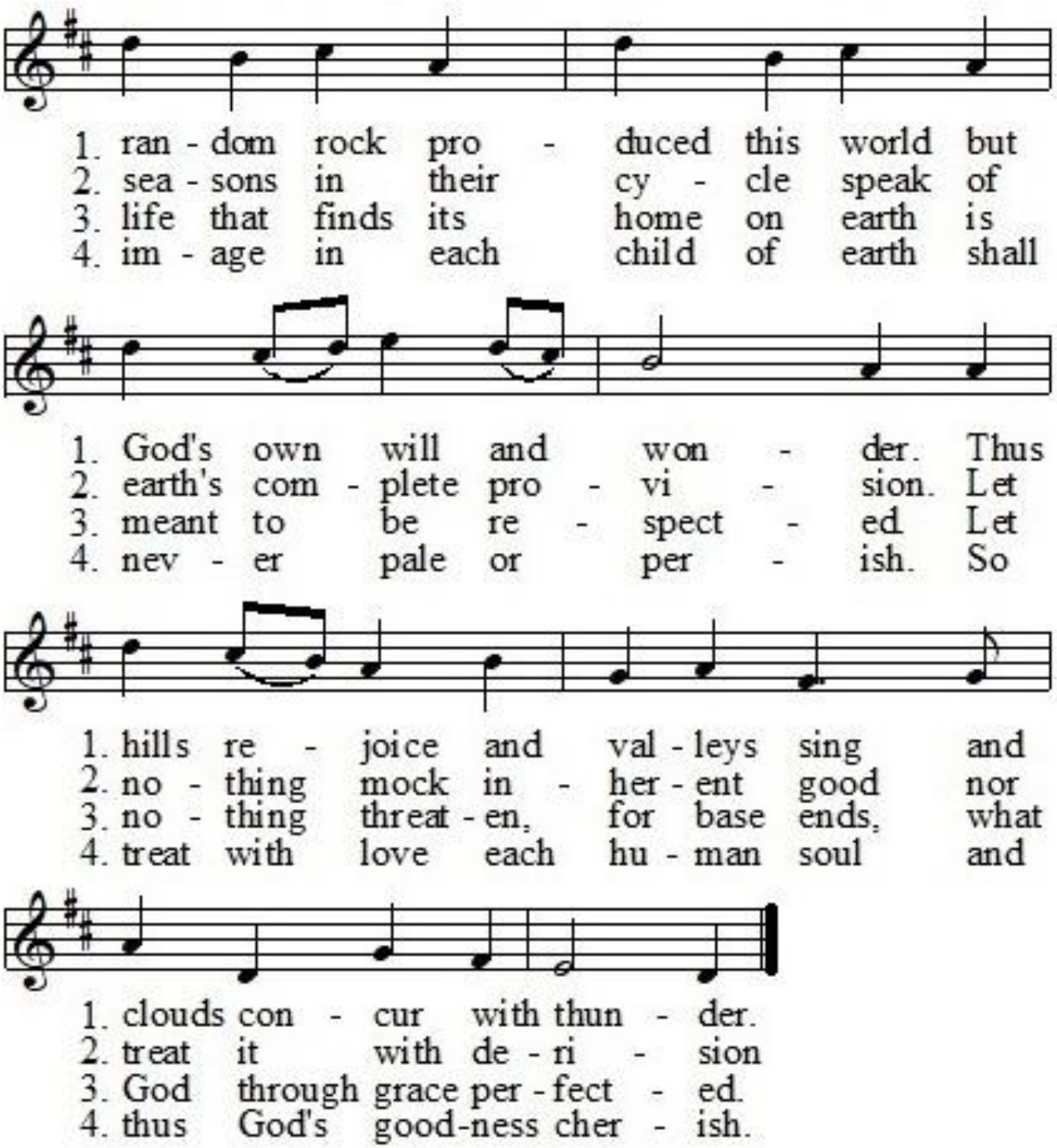
Almighty and everliving God,
we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.
And now, Father, send us out
to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you
as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.
To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen

Blessing & Dismissal

Holy eternal Majesty, Holy incarnate Word,
Holy abiding Spirit, Bless you for evermore. *Amen*

Parting Hymn:





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Psalm 25:1-8 "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul"
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Sequence Hymn: "Born in human likeness"
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Closing Hymn: "Sing praise to God on mountaintops"
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Music: *Vicar of Bray*; John L. Bell (1949-)
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Semi-continuous Old Testament Lesson: **Exodus 17:1-7**

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

Gloria Dei Episcopal Church

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A Missionary Outpost of the
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The Rt. Rev. Jeremiah D. Williamson, Bishop

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