

# **Cultivating Love through Lent With Call, Response and Conversation A Lenten Journey for the Nebraska Synod for Lent 2025**

As we prepare for our Lenten Journeys to come, the Nebraska Synod walks together cultivating love. One of those ways that we can do this, is through a shared Lenten experience.

## **Overview of this Resource**

During the 2024-2025 ministry year, the Nebraska Synod is committed to ministry together under the theme of Cultivating Love. During the bulk of Lent, in the month of March, there will be a particular focus on “Cultivating Love through Response.” This theme is central in this Cultivating Love resource offering for the Lenten season.

To help practice “Cultivating Love through Response,” this Lenten resource is designed to be a “Call and Response and Conversation.” There are questions for reflection, and space for story sharing. Any of the questions could shape or inform a faith story or homiletic reflection, if desired.

This resource provides a basic structure for mid-week worship under this theme, with suggested scriptures, hymns, and discussion questions based on the scriptures and themes. Within this document are full outlines for all five weeks. These are meant to be adapted and adjusted based on your context and are easily adaptable for your preferred bulletin or slide structure. For congregations who prefer a single 8.5x11” sheet of paper for a bulletin, also provided on the Nebraska Synod website are basic service outlines for each week.

## **Notes, Suggestions and Things to Consider**

### **Space Considerations**

*Call, Response and Conversation* requires that worshipers can talk with one another either one on one or in small groups. Consider what space will be most conducive to that. It may be the sanctuary, where worshipers can be invited to move closer to one another during the time for conversation. Or it may be a different space like a fellowship hall, where seats can be arranged around tables or in circles. Think about where people will hear each other best and how music can be included in that space. Consider too if this opportunity will be for in-person only participants, online only participants, or a hybrid of both, and be intentional about how you will engage the whole faith community as a part of this experience.

### **Storytellers**

There is a time within each midweek worship service for God’s people to share their call stories. Many of these stories will come from the prior conversation, or be based on one (or more) of the conversation questions. Anyone can tell a story of how they have responded to God’s call with their hands, voice, time, talents, or courage. However, if sharing stories extemporaneously is something that has not been done often within your context, you may choose to line up a speaker for each week, giving them time to prepare. Another possibility is lining up a speaker for the first week or two instead of all five, so that worshipers have a chance to hear an example before they volunteer their own stories.

To engage the whole congregation, it would be ideal to include voices from across the congregation in sharing stories. However, if the time or feeling of this does not seem to resonate for your context, this space could be alternatively used for further reflection on one or more of the conversation questions for the evening, perhaps in the form of a brief homily.

## Marking Our Way to the Cross

A visual representation of the Lenten journey can either be added to the worship space or sent home with worshipers each week. Here are some ideas of simple ways to represent each week:

**Week 1**     *We respond with our hands.*

Either trace hands on colorful paper and cut out or stamp handprints.

**Week 2**     *We respond with our voices.*

Sound is harder to represent visually, but old CDs or sheet music could be used.

**Week 3**     *We respond with time.*

Make clock faces with paper plates and brads or use calendar pages.

**Week 4**     *We respond with talents.*

We often refer to talents as gifts. Use wrapping paper and ribbon. Certain gifts are also included in the readings, so scraps of wood or fabric could also be used.

**Week 5**     *What is holding us back?*

We talk about hurdles this week. Create some hurdles from any materials. Or, to represent that God provides us with what we need, use arrows, green lights, or something else to represent that we have the go ahead.

These are just starting points. They may spark bigger and better ideas. Do what works in your context, although it may surprise you which adults are interested in creating when given an opportunity and direction.

## Music and Hymn Suggestions

Within the worship outline, there is no mention of prelude or postlude. Depending on your context, both could be included prior to and following worship. Alternatively, if your context will be serving a meal prior to or following worship, consider how the service experience will flow out of or into the meal space. That may inform what kind of musical feel and experience you may want to include and incorporate.

Each week's service includes three hymn spaces within the worship order. You may observe and adapt them as helpful. The call to worship or opening hymn suggestion from week to week is the same, creating the potential of a regular entry point to the service throughout the Lenten Journey. The same is true for the closing or sending hymn. The suggested hymn of the day varies from week to week, based on the theme focus and scripture readings. Of note, each hymn space within the worship order includes at least one suggestion from both the ELW (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*), and the LBW (*Lutheran Book of Worship*), which should make these hymn choices accessible for the entire Nebraska Synod. Additionally, there are also possible hymn suggestions from the ACS (*All Creation Sings*), and WOV (*With One Voice*) hymnals.

During the hymn of the day, we will respond to God with our gifts of song and offering. This would be the appropriate space each week to receive an offering during the worship order.

## Other Worship Notes

Many congregations of the Nebraska Synod like to include a healing service during the Lenten season. To assist with this, an optional healing service has been included within the order for the Fifth and final Wednesday of this series. It is included within the worship order for that day as an option during the prayers section.

## **Graphics**

Graphics which can be included within the worship space and on your congregation's bulletins or slides, and in promotion of this Lenten journey will be added to the synod website soon. These graphics can be used in a number of ways:

- 1) Use for publicity of midweek worship services.
- 2) Add to bulletins or slides for added interest.
- 3) Instead of creating something each week as suggested in Marking Our Way to the Cross, either add a graphic to the worship space or send a graphic home with worshipers each week.

## **Copyright Considerations**

No hymn texts or melodies are included in this resource, but the hymns are noted with their numbers and hymnals that they can be found in. All are accessible and available through *Sundays and Seasons* as well. Please be good stewards and note appropriate copyright licensing and credits for the hymns that you use.

For the included biblical stories and texts, please use the following citation:

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All biblical references included in this resource come from the New Revised Standard Version, under the license and permission shared above.

## **Final Word of Encouragement**

This resource is offered in the hope that it might be of use to you and all of God's people, particularly of the Nebraska Synod. Please adapt it as you see fit and let the synod office know how it goes. We walk together, and respond together out of deep gratitude, hope, and joy for all that God has done, will do, and promises to do for all of God's beloved.

May your Lenten Journey be one of gracious response, and of cultivating love. As together we journey towards the cross, sharing stories, pondering questions, and growing together as God's people.

In deep hope and gratitude for you, and with Christ's abundant love and peace,  
Pastor Heidi Wallace & Deacon Timothy Siburg

**Cultivating Love through Lent  
With Call, Response and Conversation  
A Lenten Journey  
Week One- Wednesday, March 12, 2025**

**We Call Out to God in Song**

**Call to Worship:** *Beautiful Things (ACS 925) or Beneath the Cross of Jesus (ELW 338/LBW 107)*

*Optional Greeting and Introduction*

L: We gather this evening in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

*Announcements- any instructions or announcements for the community may be shared here.*

L: This evening we call out to God, and God calls us. We gather, respond, and are sent. Let us center ourselves for worship and in the Spirit's presence.

**We Call Out to God in Psalms**

**Psalm 63:1-4**

L: O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

**C: SO I HAVE LOOKED UPON YOU IN THE SANCTUARY, BEHOLDING YOUR POWER AND GLORY.**

L: Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

**L: SO I WILL BLESS YOU AS LONG AS I LIVE: I WILL LIFT UP MY HANDS AND CALL ON YOUR NAME.**

**God Calls God's People in Scripture**

**Exodus 3:7-15;4:5**

**3** <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup>and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup>[God] said, "I will be with you; and this will be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

<sup>13</sup>But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you.' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I AM who I AM." [God] said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.'"

**4** Then Moses answered, "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup>And [God] said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand, and seize it by the

tail” – so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand – <sup>5</sup>“so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

### **John 6:1-11**

**6** After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup>A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. <sup>3</sup>Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. <sup>4</sup>Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. <sup>5</sup>When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” <sup>6</sup>He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup>Philip answered him, “Six months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.” <sup>8</sup>One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup>“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. <sup>11</sup>then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

### **God’s People Respond in Conversation**

#### *Questions for Reflection, Conversation, and Stories*

- If you were to put Moses’ response to God’s call in one-word, what word would that be?
- God asks Moses, “What is that in your hand?” What is in his hand and how is it used?
- In the reading from John, Jesus uses what is at hand. Think of a time that you have used either what was in your hand or at hand to respond to God’s call. How were God’s people served? How did it feel to know you did not have to buy more or be more? How did you know you had and were enough?

### **God’s People Share Their Call Stories**

*A story or stories may be shared here. Alternatively, a further reflection or homily may be offered related to the above questions and scripture readings. (See directions about the opportunity for stories in the overview notes.)*

### **We Respond to God with Our Gifts of Song and Offering**

**Hymn of the Day:** *Loaves Were Broken, Words Were Spoken (ACS 966) or Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow (ELW 327/LBW 355)*

### **We Call Out to God in Prayer**

L: God of all generations, we thank you for all that you have given us. May what is in our hands or at hand be seen as gifts from you and signs that you have called and sent us. As we mark our journey to the cross, be with us and with all for whom we pray:

L: We pray for the Church. May we always keep in mind the gifts you have given us to not only have in hand or at hand, but also to place in the hands of those we are called to respond to in love. We thank you especially for those who have shared their stories of responding to your call. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for your creation. For too long we have used natural resources as though they would always be at hand. Recognizing their limitations and repercussions, help us to better steward resources so that they go to all those in need for generations to come. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for all those in your care. Strengthen those who use their hands in the art of caretaking. Embrace all those in need of healing. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

*Here other intercessions may be added.*

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

*The Lord's Prayer*

### **We Respond to God in Song**

**Evening Sending Hymn:**     *Abide with Me (ELW 629/LBW 272) or Watch, O Lord (ACS 996)*

### ***Blessing and Sending***

*Option 1:*

Matthew 26:16

**C: WHEN THEY HAD SUNG THE HYMN, THEY WENT OUT . . .**

*Or Option 2:*

L: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The peace of Christ may be shared with one another as all depart in peace.*

**Cultivating Love through Lent  
With Call, Response and Conversation  
A Lenten Journey  
Week Two- Wednesday, March 19, 2025**

**We Call Out to God in Song**

**Call to Worship:** *Beautiful Things (ACS 925) or Beneath the Cross of Jesus (ELW 338/LBW 107)*

*Optional Greeting and Introduction*

L: We gather this evening in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

*Announcements- any instructions or announcements for the community may be shared here.*

L: This evening we call out to God, and God calls us. We gather, respond, and are sent. Let us center ourselves for worship and in the Spirit's presence.

**We Call Out to God in Psalms**

**Psalm 116:1-13**

L: I love the Lord, because [the LORD] has heard my voice and my supplications.

**C: BECAUSE [THE LORD] INCLINED [THE LORD'S] EAR TO ME, THEREFORE I WILL CALL ON [THE LORD] AS LONG AS I LIVE.**

L: The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

**C: THEN I CALLED ON THE NAME OF THE LORD: "O LORD, I PRAY, SAVE MY LIFE!"**

L: Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

**C: HE LORD PROTECTS THE SIMPLE; WHEN I WAS BROUGHT LOW, [THE LORD] SAVED ME.**

L: Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

**C: FOR YOU HAVE DELIVERED MY SOUL FROM DEATH, MY EYES FROM TEARS, MY FEET FROM STUMBLING.**

L: I walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

**C: I KEPT MY FAITH, EVEN WHEN I SAID, "I AM GREATLY AFFLICTED";**

L: I said in my consternation, "Everyone is a liar."

**C: WHAT SHALL I RETURN TO THE LORD FOR ALL HIS BOUNTY TO ME?**

L: I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.

**God Calls God's People in Scripture**

**Jeremiah 1:4-9**

**1** <sup>4</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, <sup>5</sup>"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

<sup>6</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a [child]." <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a [child]'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you, <sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD." <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD put out [the LORD'S] hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth."

## **Luke 1:46-55**

**14** <sup>6</sup>And Mary said, <sup>47</sup>“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup>for [the Lord] has looked with favor on the lowliness of [God’s] servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; <sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is [God’s] name. <sup>50</sup>[God’s] mercy is for those who fear [God] from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup>[God] has shown strength with [God’s] arm; [God] has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. <sup>52</sup>[God] has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; <sup>53</sup>[God] has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. <sup>54</sup>[God] has helped [God’s] servant Israel, in remembrance of [God’s] mercy, <sup>55</sup>according to the promise [God] made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.”

### **God’s People Respond in Conversation**

#### *Questions for Reflection, Conversation, and Stories*

- Elsewhere in Luke (Luke 2:19), Mary treasures words and ponders them in her heart. Why do you suppose she raised her voice in this song?
- Do you hear praise, promise, justice, or something else in Mary’s voice?
- Jeremiah tells God he doesn’t know how to speak. Many people are afraid of public speaking. What other ways are there to raise one’s voice?
- Think about a time when you used your voice in some way to lift up a person or a cause. Did you feel you had the “right” words? Did God put words in your mouth? How was the person or the cause affected? How were you affected?

### **God’s People Share Their Call Stories**

*A story or stories may be shared here. Alternatively, a further reflection or homily may be offered related to the above questions and scripture readings. (See directions about the opportunity for stories in the overview notes.)*

### **We Respond to God with Our Gifts of Song and Offering**

**Hymn of the Day:** *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (ELW 251); O Word of God Incarnate (LBW 231/ELW 514); or God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me/O Christ, Surround Me (ACS 1084)*

### **We Call Out to God in Prayer**

*From Psalm 116:17-19:*

L: I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

**C: I WILL PAY MY VOWS TO THE LORD IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL HIS PEOPLE,**

L: In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

**C: PRAISE THE LORD!**

L: Lord, we call on your name. Mighty One, we lift our voices in prayer to you. Listen – as always – to the words we speak and the prayers we hold close to our hearts. As we mark our journey to the cross, be with us and with all for whom we pray:

L: We pray for the Church. As we gather together in worship and in service, let us lift our voices in praise of you and in proclamation of your good news for all people. We thank you especially for those who have raised their voices and shared their stories of responding to your call. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**



L: We pray for your creation. Some of creation has tried to deafen us with the loud sounds of tornadoes and hurricanes. Yet, we know you are not in the destruction, but in the response to those hurting and recovering. Thank you for disaster response teams, ecologists, meteorologists, climate specialists, and all who seek to understand your creation better, raise alerts, and teach us to care for creation and one another. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for all those whose voices have not been heard: those oppressed, those trafficked, those unseen. When we see injustice, help us to say something; to use what voice we have been given to lift up those in need of attention and care. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

*Here other intercessions may be added.*

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

*The Lord's Prayer*

### **We Respond to God in Song**

**Evening Sending Hymn:** *Abide with Me (ELW 629/LBW 272) or Watch, O Lord (ACS 996)*

### ***Blessing and Sending***

*Option 1:*

Matthew 26:16

**C: WHEN THEY HAD SUNG THE HYMN, THEY WENT OUT . . .**

*Or Option 2:*

L: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The peace of Christ may be shared with one another as all depart in peace.*

**Cultivating Love through Lent  
With Call, Response and Conversation  
A Lenten Journey  
Week Three- Wednesday, March 26, 2025**

**We Call Out to God in Song**

**Call to Worship:** *Beautiful Things (ACS 925) or Beneath the Cross of Jesus (ELW 338/LBW 107)*

*Optional Greeting and Introduction*

L: We gather this evening in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

*Announcements- any instructions or announcements for the community may be shared here.*

L: This evening we call out to God, and God calls us. We gather, respond, and are sent. Let us center ourselves for worship and in the Spirit's presence.

**We Call Out to God in Psalms**

**Psalm 34:1-3**

L: I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

**C: MY SOUL MAKES ITS BOAST IN THE LORD; LET THE HUMBLE HEAR AND BE GLAD.**

L: O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt [the LORD's] name together.

**God Calls God's People in Scripture**

**Luke 10:38-42**

**10** <sup>38</sup>Now as [Jesus and the disciples] went on their way, [Jesus] entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup>But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup>But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup>there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

**Ephesians 5:15-20**

**5** <sup>15</sup>Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**God's People Respond in Conversation**

*Questions for Reflection, Conversation, and Stories*

- We sometimes villainize Martha for doing, when Jesus says she is "worried and distracted" by many things. What are some things you are worried and distracted by that interrupt your doing or listening?

- Where in your day or week do you take time to listen to God?
- When you have responded to God with time, what has that time meant to you? How has that time then extended to time with others?
- Ephesians speaks of “singing and making melody in your hearts.” How do you see us making melody with our lives?
- How do you see us harmonizing with others?

### **God’s People Share Their Call Stories**

*A story or stories may be shared here. Alternatively, a further reflection or homily may be offered related to the above questions and scripture readings. (See directions about the opportunity for stories in the overview notes.)*

### **We Respond to God with Our Gifts of Song and Offering**

**Hymn of the Day:** *God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me/O Christ Surround Me (ACS 1084), Praise to You, O God of Mercy (WOV 790), or Take My Life That I May Be (ELW 685/LBW 406)*

### **We Call Out to God in Prayer**

L: God of all times and places, you have given us ways to measure time and spend time. We thank you for speaking to us and among us in the time we have spent together. As we mark our journey to the cross, be with us and with all for whom we pray:

L: We pray for the Church. Help us to use our time wisely and not to be worried and distracted by many things. You welcome us to listen, speak, and sing to you in all times and at any time. We thank you especially for those who have given of themselves and their time in sharing their stories of responding to your call. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for your creation. We have thought of your creation as lasting forever, but as we see fossil fuels being depleted, land eroding, oceans filling with pollution, and species becoming extinct, we are ever more mindful of limits. Show us how to best steward your creation for generations to come. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for all for whom time is fleeting. Embrace all who have received terminal diagnoses, who are on hospice, and who are counting every moment with a loved one. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

*Here other intercessions may be added.*

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

### **We Respond to God in Song**

**Evening Sending Hymn:** *Abide with Me (ELW 629/LBW 272) or Watch, O Lord (ACS 996)*

***Blessing and Sending***

***Option 1:***

Matthew 26:16

**C: WHEN THEY HAD SUNG THE HYMN, THEY WENT OUT . . .**

***Or Option 2:***

L: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The peace of Christ may be shared with one another as all depart in peace.*

**Cultivating Love through Lent  
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Week Four- Wednesday, April 2, 2025**

**We Call Out to God in Song**

**Call to Worship:** *Beautiful Things (ACS 925) or Beneath the Cross of Jesus (ELW 338/LBW 107)*

***Optional Greeting and Introduction***

L: We gather this evening in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

*Announcements- any instructions or announcements for the community may be shared here.*

L: This evening we call out to God, and God calls us. We gather, respond, and are sent. Let us center ourselves for worship and in the Spirit's presence.

**We Call Out to God in Psalms**

**Psalm 62:5-8**

L: For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from [God].

**C: [GOD] ALONE IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION, MY FORTRESS; I SHALL NOT BE SHAKEN.**

L: On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

**C: TRUST IN [GOD] AT ALL TIMES, O PEOPLE; POUR OUR YOUR HEART BEFORE [GOD]; GOD IS A REFUGE FOR US.**

**God Calls God's People in Scripture**

**1 Chronicles 22:6-16**

**22** <sup>6</sup>Then [David] called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. <sup>7</sup>David said to Solomon, "My son, I had planned to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. <sup>8</sup>But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to my name because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth. <sup>9</sup>See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. <sup>10</sup>He shall build a house for my name. He shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.' <sup>11</sup>Now, my son, the LORD be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as [the LORD your God] has spoken concerning you. <sup>12</sup>Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, so that when [the LORD] gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD our God.

<sup>13</sup>Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed. <sup>14</sup>With great pains I have provided for the house of the LORD one hundred talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it; timber and stone too I have provided. To these you must add more. <sup>15</sup>You have an abundance of workers: stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of artisans without number, skilled in working <sup>16</sup>gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you."

## **Acts 9:36-43**

**9** <sup>36</sup>Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. <sup>37</sup>At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. <sup>38</sup>Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." <sup>39</sup>So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. <sup>40</sup>Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup>He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. <sup>42</sup>This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup>Meanwhile [Peter] stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

### **God's People Respond in Conversation**

#### *Questions for Reflection, Conversation, and Stories*

- *Talents*, as referred to in 1 Chronicles, indicates a sum or denomination of weight. Over time, the word took on the meaning of "gift committed to one for use or improvement" and evolved still further to our current definition involving ability or aptitude. Given this information, what talents do you see in the reading from 1 Chronicles as being required for the successful building of the temple?
- If you were to build a new church building, what talents would be needed?
- What talents did Tabitha/Dorcas contribute to her community?
- When we see the church not as a building, but as the people of God, what talents are needed to build up the body of Christ? What talents do you contribute to this? Are there talents that you have that you feel are overused or underused? If so, what are they?

### **God's People Share Their Call Stories**

*A story or stories may be shared here. Alternatively, a further reflection or homily may be offered related to the above questions and scripture readings. (See directions about the opportunity for stories in the overview notes.)*

### **We Respond to God with Our Gifts of Song and Offering**

**Hymn of the Day:** *Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death (ELW 452/WOV 745); Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ (ELW 674/WOV 754); or God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending (LBW 408/ELW 678)*

### **We Call Out to God in Prayer**

**L:** Generous God, you have given your people a variety of gifts. Some of them we deem as possessions; some, talents. For all we have and for all we can do, we give you thanks. As we mark our journey to the cross, be with us and with all for whom we pray:

**L:** We pray for the Church. With the many and various talents your people possess, we should be able to build up your people, instead of tearing down one another. Help us to use what we have been given to the glory of your name. We thank you especially for those who have shared their call stories of how they have used their God-given talents. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for your creation. For those whose talents are to plant, tend to, and grow your creation: gardeners, farmers, and arborists, we give you thanks. Inspire us with the beauty and nutrients they bring into your world. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for all those in your care. For those whose talents are in caretaking: nurses, doctors, and therapists, we give you thanks. Continue to give them compassion, skill, and wisdom as they treat those in their care. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

*Here other intercessions may be added.*

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

*The Lord's Prayer*

### **We Respond to God in Song**

**Evening Sending Hymn:**      *Abide with Me (ELW 629/LBW 272) or Watch, O Lord (ACS 996)*

### ***Blessing and Sending***

*Option 1:*

Matthew 26:16

**C: WHEN THEY HAD SUNG THE HYMN, THEY WENT OUT . . .**

*Or Option 2:*

L: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The peace of Christ may be shared with one another as all depart in peace.*

**Cultivating Love through Lent  
With Call, Response and Conversation  
A Lenten Journey  
Week Five- Wednesday, April 9, 2025**

**We Call Out to God in Song**

**Call to Worship:** *Beautiful Things (ACS 925) or Beneath the Cross of Jesus (ELW 338/LBW 107)*

*Optional Greeting and Introduction*

L: We gather this evening in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

*Announcements- any instructions or announcements for the community may be shared here.*

L: This evening we call out to God, and God calls us. We gather, respond, and are sent. Let us center ourselves for worship and in the Spirit's presence.

**We Call Out to God in Psalms**

**Psalm 31:21-24**

L: Blessed be the LORD, for [the LORD] has wondrously shown steadfast love to me when I was beset as a city under siege.

**C: I HAD SAID IN MY ALARM, "I AM DRIVEN FAR FROM YOUR SIGHT." BUT YOU HEARD MY SUPPLICATIONS WHEN I CRIED OUT TO YOU FOR HELP.**

L: Love the LORD, all you saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

**C: BE STRONG, AND LET YOUR HEART TAKE COURAGE, ALL YOU WHO WAIT FOR THE LORD.**

**God Calls God's People in Scripture**

**Mark 2:1-12**

**2** When [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup>Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup>And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup>Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>"Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup>At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk?' <sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – he said to the paralytic – <sup>11</sup>"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." <sup>12</sup>And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



## **Acts 8:26-36**

**8** <sup>26</sup>Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So [Philip] got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup>and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” <sup>31</sup>[The Ethiopian eunuch] replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to [the eunuch] the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”

### **God’s People Respond in Conversation**

#### *Questions for Reflection, Conversation, and Stories*

- What hurdles were faced by the people who carried the paralyzed man? How were these hurdles overcome? What risks were involved?
- What hurdles were faced by the Ethiopian eunuch? How were these hurdles overcome? What risks were involved?
- With whom have you faced hurdles or done something that involved risks?
- What opportunity (or opportunities) would you have missed if you had not taken a risk?
- The eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” In seeing what is available to us, how might we complete the following?
  - ♥ Look, here is food! What is to prevent us from \_\_\_\_\_
  - ♥ Look, here are scraps of wood! What is to prevent us from \_\_\_\_\_
  - ♥ Look, here is unused space in this building! What is to prevent us from \_\_\_\_\_

### **God’s People Share Their Call Stories**

*A story or stories may be shared here. Alternatively, a further reflection or homily may be offered related to the above questions and scripture readings. (See directions about the opportunity for stories in the overview notes.)*

### **We Respond to God with Our Gifts of Song and Offering**

**Hymn of the Day:** *Take Me to the Water (ACS 957); Healer of Our Every Ill (ELW 612/WOV 738); or Just As I Am, without One Plea (LBW 296/ELW 592)*

## We Call Out to God in Prayer

L: Empowering One, help us to see all the ways in which we can respond to you as opportunities to connect with you and with one another. As we mark our journey to the cross, be with us and with all for whom we pray:

L: We pray for the Church. We can readily list all the reasons we are holding back even as you call us to move forward. Allow us to see the people you place in our midst who are willing to overcome hurdles and take risks to become a new thing, created and sustained by you. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for your creation. Be with all who plant, not knowing how things will grow, but hoping and trusting that with care they will. As we see new life spring forth, let us admire the beauty and keep us aware of the fragility of your creation. Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

L: We pray for all those in your care. For those who take risks to keep us protected: firefighters, first responders, and police officers, we give you thanks. We pray for their safety and for all whom they rescue. We pray especially for . . . Hear us, O God.

**C: YOUR MERCY IS GREAT.**

*Here other intercessions may be added.*

### **OPTIONAL Service of Healing Laying of Hands and Anointing**

*For the final Wednesday prior to the beginning of Holy Week, your context may find it meaningful to include a brief service of healing through the laying on of hands and anointing. If using this in worship, it could be used as a part of the prayer time, and then following this, the service would continue with the Lord's prayer.*

*Those who wish to receive the laying on of hands (and anointing of oil) may come forward to the altar rail kneeling if you so choose. While the laying on of hands occurs, quiet music may be played in the background, or hymns of the Lenten season or hymns of healing may be sung.*

When being anointed, the pastoral leader may say:

L: Through this holy anointing may God's love and mercy uphold you by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Prayer After Anointing**

L: Let us pray. As you are anointed with this oil, may God bless you with the healing power of the Holy Spirit. May God forgive you your sins, release you from suffering, and restore to you wholeness and strength. May God deliver you from all evil, preserve you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us:

*The Lord's Prayer*

**We Respond to God in Song**

**Evening Sending Hymn:** *Abide with Me (ELW 629/LBW 272) or Watch, O Lord (ACS 996)*

***Blessing and Sending***

***Option 1:***

Matthew 26:16

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***Or Option 2:***

L: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**C: Amen.**

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*The peace of Christ may be shared with one another as all depart in peace.*