

March 15 2026

Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:15 AM

Theme: The good news is...protection and care for the vulnerable.

Paragraph for bulletin cover:

In many modern contexts, it may seem sweet that Jesus welcomed little children; however, in Jesus' setting, spending time with children would have seemed wasteful or useless. When Jesus blesses a crowd of children (after the disciples rebuke them and try to send them away), he once again reorients socially-constructed hierarchies to center the vulnerable. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized the last, the least, and the lost, building upon the mandates of the Hebrew scriptures to care for the immigrant, widow, and orphan among you. Deuteronomy repeatedly reminds the Israelites, "you were once slaves in Egypt." Their memory of oppression should impel them to provide for anyone under-resourced or cut off from the protection of a household. Similarly, Jesus uplifting children is a reminder that we were all once children and we have all been vulnerable at some point in our lives, relying on the protection and care of others. If we're truly living out the good news, then anyone vulnerable will not only be protected from harm, but cared for so they have the chance to thrive.

+ GATHERING +

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

WELCOME AND GREETING

PRELUDE Prelude on "Martyrdom" - Healey Willan

CALL TO WORSHIP

God loves the field mouse.

God loves the crows that take flight when church bells ring.

God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.

God loves the child who rocks and claps.

God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.

God loves the bumblebees and the tabby cats.

God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.

God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,

standing strong over all of us.

God loves the young, the impressionable, and the earnest.

There is no bit of creation that God does not love.

So let us worship our God!

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW 781 Children of the Heavenly Father

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Family of Faith, every week we pray the Prayer of Confession, because every week we need to be reminded of God's abundant grace. Every week we need to be reminded of God's love. Every week we need to be reminded that we too can grow and change. So join me in this moment of honesty as we seek transformation. Friends, let us pray:

God said, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them."

Holy God, we confess, we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

We confess, we have clung to guns and war more than we have pursued peace.

God said, "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow."

We confess, we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbors.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them."

We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.

Fortunately for all of us, God also said,

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine."

**By God's grace, despite our sin and shortcomings,
we are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.**

May this good news change our lives!

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy One, sometimes the simplest of your commands are the hardest for us to hear. You say, "Love your enemy." "Turn the other cheek." "Care for the widow and the orphan." And we want to know: How? When? Where? Today as we turn to your word, open up space in us to simply hear your truth for what it is. Open up space in our hearts to dream new dreams, to imagine new realities, to draw closer to you and closer to love. With hope for a better tomorrow, we listen as we pray in Your name. **Amen.**

+ WORD +

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 24:17-22

At the conclusion of the reading:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Matthew 19:13-15

At the conclusion of the reading:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY See the Precious Children



See the pre-cious chil-dren seat - ed on the lap of Christ our Lord
See the pre-cious wi-dowed wo - men glean-ing har-vests from the field
See the pre-cious for - eign stran - gers as they car - ry all they own
See the pre-cious dis - poss - essed ones ask - ing for some food to eat
See the pre-cious world im - pov - erished by our ma - lice and our greed



Called the great - est in the king-dom, held so gent - ly and a - dored They
Then re - turn - ing to their kit - chen to pre - pare their dai - ly meal They
To a land that's full of dan - gers for the pow - er - less and prone They
Sleep - ing un - der star - ry heav - ens, dai - ly liv - ing on the streets They
Hu - mans, a - ni - mals, and pla - net cry - ing out for some re - lief We're



are pre-cious in the sight of God who made each ti - ny toe In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who holds their bro - ken hearts In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who made their home-land, too In their
are pre-cious in the sight of God who loves them as a child In their
all pre-cious in the sight of God who made each ho - ly thing In our



weak-ness they're held by love as each day they learn and grow
sor - row they're held by love that re - deems each fra - gile part
jour - ney they're held by love as they start each day a - new
hun - ger they're held by love as they guard their hu - man pride
liv - ing we're held by love as we care for ev - ery being

AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

**It sounds like welcome
and feels like home.**

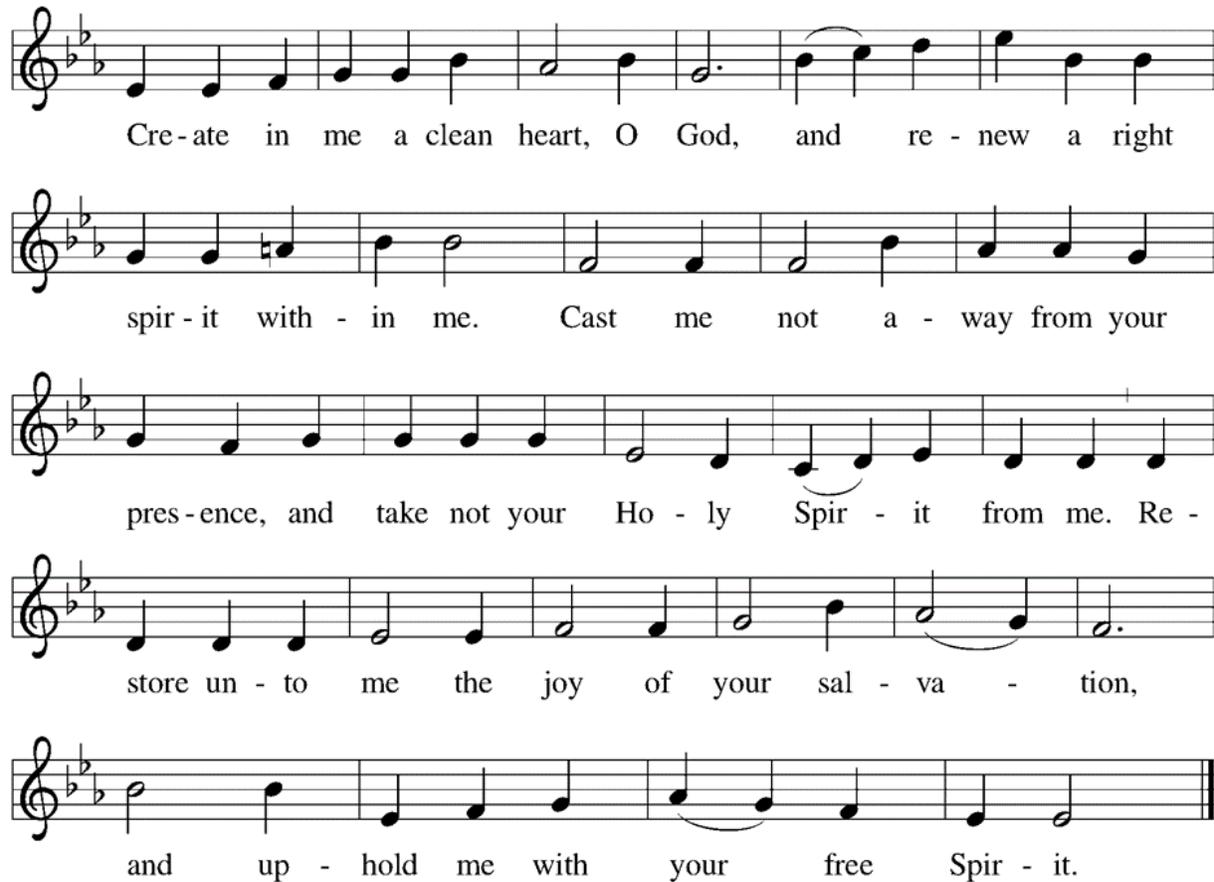
**It sounds like laughter
and feels like mercy.**

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.

LAMB OF GOD



Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION INSTRUCTIONS – continuous on the floor

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION ELW 496 One Bread, One Body

TABLE BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of good news, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

+ SENDING +

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

As you leave this place,
when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.

**For the good news of the gospel is
love and justice for all.**

**It is joy that surprises,
and nonviolence that transforms.**

The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
so go forth speaking it,
in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

For if you won't, then who will?

Thanks be to God
for this good, good news.

Amen.

SENDING SONG ELW 323 God Loved the World

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the good news!

Thanks be to God.

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PRAYER LIST

Please continue to keep the following people connected to our congregation in your prayers: Bob Moran, Leonard Gibeon, David Mounts, Ed & Billie Schanely, Steve Keyser, Andrew Breuninger, Renee Fels, Rebecca Jellen, Richard Ditzler, Joy Miller, Alyson Harvey, Audrey Sell, Marie Wolfe, Erik Ockenlaender, Mary Eberle, Brandon Blanchard, Gladys Kazalonis, Elizabeth Brossett and family, Paige Seasock, Tanner Antalosky, Will Morgan, Richard Mitchell, David Wargo, Kate Umstead, Barry Long and Jim Martin.

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, March 16	5:30 Lenten Soup and Study 7pm Great Songs of Faith Choir rehearsal
Wednesday, March 18	7pm Mid Week Worship at St. John's in Sumneytown
Saturday, March 21	9:30-11:30am First Communion Retreat
Sunday, March 22	9am Sunday School 10:15 Worship Rise Against Hunger Event at St. Paul's in Red Hill

Easter Flower Order Forms are available in the narthex and in the parlor. The order forms will be due Wednesday, March 18th.

First Communion Workshop Saturday, March 21 9:30-11:30 AM

Any 2nd-5th grade student who has not received communion is welcome to attend this spring's first communion workshop. A parent/grandparent must attend the workshop with each student. Students who attend will receive their first communion on Sunday, March 29 at the 10:15 AM service - a luncheon with cake will be held after worship to celebrate with our first communion recipients. Sign up link on Monday's weekly email or contact Pastor Becky.

RISE Against Hunger Event is March 22nd. The new sign up is available outside of Pastor Becky's office.

Family Bathroom We are adding a family bathroom to meet the needs of some of our members. It's a big job. I believe the job itself has been blessed. The architect provided our plan pro bono. The supplier of most of the fixtures for the bathroom has discounted their products in exchange for some advertising opportunities. They even donated the sink! It's still an expensive project. We are in search of grants. Grants aren't easy. But, we're doing our best. If you know of one that might help us please let the office or a Church Council member know. In the mean time, if you feel it in your heart, we have a designated fund for donations. As you know, many hands make the lift easier! Just write "Family Bathroom" on an envelope. Thank You!

Mid-Week Lent Worship 2026

Mid-week Lenten worship will be held on Wednesdays at 7 PM followed by a time of fellowship and food. We hope you'll join us!

March 18 – What are you looking for?

Worship at St. John's Lutheran Church, Sunneystown; preacher Pastor
Serena Sellers

March 25 – Who do you say that I am?

Worship at Palm Schwenkfelder Church, Palm; preacher Pastor Becky Schanely

Sunday Morning Coffee Bar is BACK! Join us at the coffee bar at the back entrance for coffee, hot tea, breakfast treats and conversation starting at 8:30AM.

Volunteers are needed to cover the coffee bar each week - which means set up, bring treats to share and clean up. The sign up sheet is available outside Pastor Becky's office - please sign up to help!

Readers Needed for Palm/Passion Sunday Palm/Passion Sunday is March 29, 2026 - we will worship at one service at 10:15 AM. The service will include the reading of the passion interspersed throughout worship. Readers are needed to participate in the reader's theater-style presentation of the passion.

There will be a rehearsal the day before, Sat. March 28, at 10 AM to run through lines and the movement of readers (when to read, where to stand, when to sit, etc.).

At the end of January this year the **2025 Tax Giving Statements** were emailed to members who have an email on record at the church. The members without email addresses statements were mailed. There have been several calls looking for them, so I emailed them out again on March 2nd. If you can't find your email or need me to resend it to you for any reason, please feel free to reach out to the church office stj.stown@verizon.net or call 215-234-4888.

Candy donations needed by Sunday, March 29 for the Soup, Salad & Egg Stuffing event



EASTER EGGstravaganza

Saturday,
April 4 at 10 AM

St. John's Lutheran Church
3104 Main Street
Sumneytown

Free for all - donations for Open Link's food pantry are welcome!



Take a
selfie with
the Easter
Bunny



For children up to age 12 - story time, egg hunt, craft bag & cookies
www.stjsumneytown.org

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY - MARCH 29

Sunday School at 9 AM

Worship 10:15 AM - beginning outdoor in the circle
Soup, Salad and Egg Stuffing Celebration after worship

MAUNDY THURSDAY - APRIL 2

Dinner church in Fellowship Hall at 6 PM
Concluding in the sanctuary with altar stripping

GOOD FRIDAY - APRIL 3

12 Noon worship at New Goshenhoppen UCC
followed by cross walk
7 PM Service of Tenebrae at St. Mark's, Pennsburg

EASTER VIGIL - APRIL 4

8 PM worship at New Goshenhoppen UCC

EASTER SUNDAY - APRIL 5

6:30 AM Sunrise Service in Friedens Union Cemetery
Pancake breakfast to follow at Friedens Fellowship Hall
10:15 AM Festival Worship at St. John's