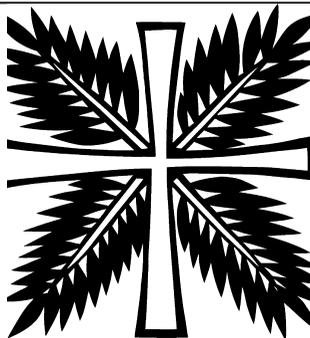


# PALM/PASSION SUNDAY

## SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

### MARCH 29, 2026



#### INTRODUCTION

Today we follow Christ from triumphal entry to the cross, each waypoint of the journey marked by Jesus' compassion for those who would betray, mock, accuse, or do violence to him. Though persecuted and beaten, Jesus the Son of God is not disgraced; instead, he asks forgiveness for those who put him to death. We have walked the Lenten pathway these forty days, each of us invited through baptism to "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." We enter this holy week accompanying Jesus to the cross with both grief and thanksgiving in our hearts, trusting in God's redeeming love.

#### GATHERING

*We gather outside (weather permitting) or in the Fellowship Hall for the Procession of Palms.*

#### WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*The congregation stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P. Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

P. Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.  
*The congregation kneels or sits if inside, outside remain standing. Silence is kept for reflection.*

P. Gracious God,  
**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**  
For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

## **Gathering Time**

*The congregation gathers to prepare for worship by offering welcome, confessing its sin, and singing praise to God.*

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain of the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

**have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace. **Amen.**

P. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

**C. Hosanna in the highest.**

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

P. The Holy Gospel according to Matthew. **C. Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."<sup>4</sup>

This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

<sup>5</sup> "Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup> they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of

him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

<sup>10</sup> When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup> The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

P. The Gospel of our Lord. **C. Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **THE BLESSING OF THE PALMS**

P. The Lord be with you.

**C. And also with you.**

P. Let us pray... We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Bless these branches and those who carry them. Grant us grace to follow Jesus in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

P. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

**C. Hosanna in the highest.**

Lutheran's believe that Christ is present with us in the Word of God (Holy Scripture) and the administration of the sacraments (Baptism and Holy Communion). Two distinct parts make up the main portion of our worship this morning: the word and the meal.

This text, the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah, speaks of the servant's obedience in the midst of persecution. Though the servant has been variously understood as the prophet himself or a remnant of faithful Israel, Christians have often recognized the figure of Christ in these poems.

**PROCESSIONAL HYMN** All Glory, Laud, and Honor

ELW 344

*All gathered process to the Sanctuary as we sing together.*

*Refrain*

All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or to you, re - deem - er, king,

to whom the lips of chil - dren made sweet ho - san - nas ring.

- 1 You are the king of Is - rael and Da - vid's roy - al Son,
- 2 The com - pa - ny of an - gels are prais - ing you on high;
- 3 The mul - ti - tude of pil - grims with palms be - fore you went;
- 4 To you, be - fore your pas - sion, they sang their hymns of praise.
- 5 Their prais - es you ac - cept - ed; ac - cept the prayers we bring,

*Refrain*

now in the Lord's name com - ing, our King and Bless - ed One.  
 cre - a - tion and all mor - tals in cho - rus make re - ply.  
 our praise and prayer and an - thems be - fore you we pre - sent.  
 To you, now high ex - alt - ed, our mel - o - dy we raise.  
 great au - thor of all good - ness, O good and gra - cious King.

Text: Theodulph of Orleans, c. 760–821; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.  
 Music: VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN, Melchior Teschner, 1584–1635

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P. O God of mercy and might, in the mystery of the passion of your Son you offer your infinite life to the world. Gather us around the cross of Christ, and preserve us until the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

*Congregation is seated*

**WORD**

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4–9a**

<sup>4</sup>GOD has given me  
 the tongue of a teacher,  
 that I may know how to sustain

the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning God wakens —  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.

<sup>5</sup>GOD has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward.

<sup>6</sup>I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.

<sup>7</sup>GOD helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

<sup>8</sup>he who vindicates me is near.  
Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.  
Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.

<sup>9</sup>It is GOD who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?

A. Word of God, word of life.

C. Thanks be to God.

## **SECOND READING: *Philippians 2:5–11***

<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup>but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup>he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death —  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

*Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn that describes Jesus' humble obedience in his incarnation as a human being, even to death, and his exaltation and glory as Lord of all.*

*Through the teachings and events of the passion story we see and hear the great contradictions that characterize the coming of God's reign. The leader serves, the empty disciples are able to fill others, proud Peter is revealed in his cowardice, and Jesus—the innocent bringer of life—is arrested, beaten, executed, and buried.*

<sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of our God.

A. Word of God, word of life.

C. Thanks be to God.

### A TIME FOR THE CHILD IN US ALL

*Children & Youth are invited forward for a special sermon time with Pastor Peggy.*

*The congregation stands to welcome the gospel.*

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

### GOSPEL & REFLECTION: *Matthew 26:14—27:66*

P. The holy gospel according to Matthew.

C. Glory to you, O Lord.

*The congregation seated. The Gospel is proclaimed.*

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

C. Praise to you, O Christ.

*Congregation stands*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

ELW 338

### 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,**

*The Prayers of the Church are an ancient way in which the assembled people of God lift their combined voices in prayer to God. During the prayers you will have an opportunity to add your own petitions for those who are suffering in mind, body or spirit at this time. You may either name those persons aloud or hold their names in your heart knowing that God is fully aware of your needs, both spoken and unspoken – in prayer.*

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,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.

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,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who 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 CHURCH

A. Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs. *A brief silence.*

O God, you announce words of grace and truth. Give wisdom to all preachers in your church both globally and locally, especially Pastor Peggy and our lay worship leaders. Open our hearts to encounter the infinite life you offer in Jesus. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. You hold the whole universe. Gather sun and moon, clouds and stars, land and sea, and plants and animals around the cross, so that all creation bears witness to your saving love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. Your power is sure. Destroy inequity and division in every place, and build your beloved community among all people. Guide judges, attorneys, and juries so that they act with justice and fairness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*The congregation may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, saying "Peace be with you." Or similar words as we wave or make a peace sign. Please respect the comfort of those around you, knowing that we all come to Christ's peace as broken people needing to be made whole.*

*An offering is gathered for the mission of the church as the Lord's Table is prepared. Our offerings continue the ministries of the church throughout Vernon, the state of New Jersey, the United States and the world wherever they are found.*

*In this second portion of this morning's liturgy, the MEAL, the saving and life-giving presence of Christ is made real in bread and wine. A sacrament is the physical sign of an unseen promise, commanded by Christ.*

A. Your heart breaks open at our pain. Send healing and vindication to all who, like Jesus, know the sting of betrayal, denial, abuse, or false accusations. Be with those experiencing pain or loss this day. We pray especially for... those we now say aloud... and those we hold in our hearts... Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. Your ways show compassion. Let this same mind be in us as we enter Holy Week. Bless those here who will lead worship and tell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. O God, your embrace is eternal. Praise and thanks to you for all the faithful departed who rest in your mercy. Deliver us all from death's power and raise us to life in you. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P. Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation. **Amen.**

### **PEACE**

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C. And also with you.**

P. Let us share with each other a sign of Christ's peace.

*Congregation is seated*

**CHOIR ANTHEM**

Let Thy Blood in Mercy Poured

Sheldon Curry

### **MEAL**

### **OFFERTORY INVITATION**

*Scan to give via Venmo* ↓



*Offering can be given by putting it in the offering plate when it is passed, online directly via the QR codes for Tithely or Venmo, or by requesting your bank to send a check to the church. Find more details on our website.*

***Thank you for your generous gifts!***

*Scan to give via Tithely* ↓



*Congregation stands*

## OFFERTORY SONG



Just as I am; thy love un-known has bro - ken ev - ry  
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

*The presiding minister greets the congregation and invites all present to give thanks.*

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

A. Let us pray... O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

## DIALOGUE & PREFACE OF THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

P. The Lord be with you.

**C. And also with you.**

P. Lift up your hearts.

**C. We lift them to the Lord.**

P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C. It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P. It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of  
 pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
 san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the  
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*Congregation kneels or sits*

### **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

P. Holy God, our living Water and our merciful Guide, together with rivers and seas, wells and springs, we bless and magnify you. You led your people Israel through the desert, and provided them water from the rock.

We praise you for Christ, our Rock and our Water, who joins us in our desert, pouring out his life for the world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await your salvation for all this thirsty world.

Pour out your Spirit on this holy food and on all gathered for this feast: wash away our sin, that we may be renewed for our journey by the love of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty God, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. Amen.

### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

### INVITATION TO COMMUNION

*Believing in the real presence of Christ, we practice Eucharistic hospitality. All baptized persons are welcome to Communion this morning. Please come forward, guided by the Ushers, to receive the bread and wine. Children are invited to the table for a blessing.*

*Gluten free and traditional wafers are available, please note this to Pastor Peggy when you come up. The bread is dairy and egg free. Grape juice is available in the second communion plate. As you return to your seat via the side aisles you can place your empty cup in the baskets on either side.*

P. Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

### COMMUNION SONG

*sing 2 times through*

Take, oh, take me as I am; sum-mon out what I shall be;

set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.

### DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*After all have received Communion the congregation stands.*

*The benediction is a farewell word from one person to another in God's name. It is a declaration and assurance that God will be with the congregation and the congregation will be with God.*

## TABLE BLESSING

P. The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

## SONG AFTER COMMUNION



“Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, nev - er a - lone.  
Wak - ing, sleep - ing, I am with you, you are my own.  
In my love's bap - tis - mal riv - er I have made you mine for - ev - er.  
Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, you are my own.”

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A. Let us pray... God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthen 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

### BENEDICTION

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

### SENDING HYMN

Three Holy Days Enfold Us Now *printed in the back*

### DISMISSAL

A. Go in peace. Believe the good news. **C. Thanks be to God.**

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# Announcements for March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026

*Welcome to Holy Counselor Lutheran Church. May you experience the joy of God's presence in our worship!*

*If today is your **first time** worshipping at Holy Counselor, please be sure to fill out the "Guest Book" on the table in the narthex and **take a welcome bag**. Please ask our ushers any questions you may have regarding worship this morning. **Large print bulletins are available.***

*The **Pray-ground** is a special place to help **support kids and families** in worshipping. We love the sound of kids in worship! God made kids wiggly and curious, and we celebrate that here. **Tips:** explain, participate, and move around together. Need to leave? No problem, but please come back!*

***Worship is live streamed** to our church Facebook page, but the camera is pointed away during Communion and is not on the children when they come forward during A Time for the Child in Us All. **Anyone on the altar is on camera.***

~~~~~  
***Thank you, Diane Diovisalvo, for this morning's refreshments!!***  
~~~~~

## Volunteers for Today's Worship

Lay Asst.	Volunteer needed
Ushers	Volunteer needed
Comm. Asst.	Volunteer needed
Tech	Mark Rossi
Tellers	Volunteer needed
Refreshments	Diane Diovisalvo

**\*\*\*\*\* Join us for refreshments after worship\*\*\*\*\***

## THIS WEEK AT HOLY COUNSELOR

**Sunday, March 29:** Sunday School, 8:45-9:15am

Worship w/Communion, Palm Sunday, 9:30am

Choir Practice following worship

Easter Egg Hunt, 11:30am-1:00pm

**Wednesday, April 1:** Adult Ed Lenten Bible Study, Zoom, 10am & 7pm

**Thursday, April 2:** Maundy Thursday Worship, 7pm

**Friday, April 3:** Good Friday Tenebrae Worship, 7pm

**Saturday, April 4:** Easter Prayer Vigil, 8pm-6am Sunday

**Sunday, April 5:** Worship w/Communion, Easter Sunday, 9:30am

Choir Practice following worship

**Pastor's Community Office Hours-April:** Pastor Peggy will be at the **Daily Bean Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> from 12:30-2:30pm** for Community Office Hours. All are welcome to visit as she is present in the community.

**Easter Prayer Vigil Sign-up:** You are invited to keep vigil in the Sanctuary beginning Saturday evening on April 4<sup>th</sup> into Easter morning on Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup>. Hour slots are available; sign-up on the chart next to Sign-up Central. **You can participate individually, as a pair, or a group.** Refreshments and reading materials will be provided.

**Sunday Morning Lay Leaders:** You are invited to **fill out the survey** to participate in worship leadership on Sunday mornings. We are hoping to have enough volunteers to **create a rotation schedule** for the various roles (tech, lay assistant, lector, teller, and usher). If you've ever been interested in helping, now is a great time to get involved!

**Vacation Bible School:** Mark your calendars for **God's Good Creation VBS this summer July 20<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>** (*note the new dates*) **from 1-4pm!** We hope the afternoon timeslot will allow for more participants. Help spread the word. Registration is open at [myvbs.org/hclcvernon](http://myvbs.org/hclcvernon)

**Ladies Tea:** Please note if you signed up for the Ladies Tea at the Auction of the Gifts there is a **new date** for this event. It is now being held on **Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 2-4pm.** You are invited to attend even if you didn't sign up at the auction. **Ticket donations are \$20. RSVP to Pam Kucks.**

**Spring Clean-up-Save the date:** Mark your calendars for **Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 9am-3pm** for our annual spring church cleanup. Youth or teens looking for service hours? This is a great way to serve. All are welcome to pitch in at any time. Bagels, coffee & pizza will be available for meals.

**NJ Synod ELCA Baseball Game Outing:** Join the Youth Ministry Mission Team at the **Somerset Patriots Game on Saturday, June 13th!** Come at 6:00 pm for a picture on the field, watch the 7:05pm game, and then stay for the fireworks. Tickets are a special price of **only \$10.50 each**, AND you will receive a \$10 gift voucher towards your food that night, just see Debra Porowski at the park for your gift card. **Purchase your own tickets [here](#)** and email us at [youthmin@njsynod.org](mailto:youthmin@njsynod.org) with any questions! All families and ages are welcome!!

**Food Pantry: Food items to help restock:** boxed cereal, canned chili, canned corn, children's juice boxes or pouches, pasta sauce, boxed jello, canned fruit, boxed potatoes, 4-pack toilet paper, body wash, & toothpaste. You can always bring donations of canned goods, paper goods, and hygiene products. All donations can be **placed in the blue bin** by the sanctuary doors. Thank you!

# Three Holy Days Enfold Us Now

1 Three ho - ly days en - fold us now in wash - ing  
2 The mys - t'ry hid from a - ges past is here re -  
3 Christ, lift - ed high up - on the tree, be - fore you

feet and break - ing bread, in cross and font and  
vealed in word and sign, for Je - sus' sto - ry  
ev - 'ry knee shall bend and ev - 'ry tongue in

life re - newed: in Christ, God's first - born from the dead.  
is our own: new life through death is God's de - sign.  
praise pro - claim: "You are the Lord of all. A - men."

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: ROCKINGHAM OLD, Edward Miller, 1731-1807, adapt.

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*As Children of God,  
we are called to share and serve  
Christ's love and bring God's word to all.*

### **CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Pastor** Rev. Peggy Ludlow  
**President** Nancy Knecht  
**Vice President** Frank Urbaniak  
**Treasurer** Claire Speroni  
**Recording Secretary** Dawn McCormick  
**Financial Secretary** John Heeren  
**Outreach Coordinator** Francine Vince  
**Nurture Coordinator** Fred Schoenagel  
**Administration Coordinator** Diane Rossi

### **PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Kristina Heeren  
Pam Kucks  
Matt Moller  
Aileen Donovan

*Holy Counselor is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Munsee people, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.*

