The abundant life is not about keeping up or comparing ourselves with someone else. It’s about trusting God and allowing His life to flow in and through us.

Sergio Rodriguez, Vicar
Mike Tessman, Worship Assistant
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Rita Jordan, Organist

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Gathering

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

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Lent is a season of repentance. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God’s invitation to attentiveness: “Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.” The landowner’s ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener’s readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ¶ one God, who gathers us in the wilderness to redeem us, anoint us, and make us new.

Amen.

In these forty days, let us be honest, confess our sin, and receive God’s promise of mercy.

God at the margins,

We have wandered far from your home; again and again, we lose our way.

We turn inward, afraid of the world around us.

We forget that you have saved your people before and promise to do so again.

Do not remember the deeds of our past, but turn our faces toward the future, where your forgiveness is sure, your welcome is clear, and your love overflows. Amen.

Like a hen who gathers her chicks,

God embraces you in tender care.

Like manna in the desert,

God feeds you with surprising mercy.

Like a loving parent,

God runs to meet you again this day, forgiving your sins for the sake of ¶ Christ, leading you from death into life.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN (ELW p. 335) Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.
KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God’s peo-ple on earth.

All

Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al-might-y God and Fa-ther, we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.

Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us;

you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re-ceive our prayer.

For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,

you a-lone are the Most High, Je-sus Christ, with the Ho-ly Spir-it,

in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther. A-men.
PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Eternal God, your kingdom has 
broken into our troubled world through the life, 
death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to 
hear your word and obey it, and bring your 
saving love to fruition in our lives, through 
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and 
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, 
now and forever. Amen.

The assembly is seated

Word

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

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to the Lord will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God’s ways are not our ways.

1Ho, everyone who thirsts, 
   come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
   come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
   without money and without price.

2Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
   and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
   and delight yourselves in rich food.

3Incline your ear, and come to me;  
   listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
   my steadfast, sure love for David.

4See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
   a leader and commander for the peoples.  
5See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
   and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
   for he has glorified you.

6Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
   call upon him while he is near;  
7let the wicked forsake their way,  
   and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSIVE READING: Psalm 63:1-8

R: O God, eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.

1 O God, you are my God; eagerly 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.

2 Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory.

3 For your steadfast love is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.

4 So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name. R

5 My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

6 when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches.

7 For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

8 My whole being clings to you; your right hand holds me fast. R

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Paul uses images from Hebrew story and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God’s faithfulness.

1 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. 6 Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. 10 And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. 13 No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.
Glory to You, O, Lord.

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

1 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 [Jesus] asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ 8 He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’"

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.
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,
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 INTERCESSION

Seeking the grace, mercy, and love of almighty God, we offer our prayers for the church, for people in need, and for all of creation.

The assembly shall kneel, as they are able.

Holy God, build up the body of Christ and cause the gifts of your Spirit to grow among us. Lead us to recognize your saving work through the spiritual practices you encourage. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Water the earth with gentle rains and melting snow. Provide clean water for drinking, washing, and nourishing plants that will bear fruit for your creatures. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Uphold people who speak your righteousness in the face of religious or political persecution. Receive martyrs like Oscar Arnulfo Romero, whom we commemorate today into your everlasting peace. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Provide relief for those suffering and in pain, especially Mitch, Laquita, Mary Louise, Francis, Lynda, Elfren, Leroy, John, as well as those that we name out loud or in our hearts... Grant wisdom to health care workers who seek to diagnose ailments, and bring healing to patients. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Promote unity within your church and among the nations. Uncover the common threads in our shared humanity, and keep us from making hasty judgments about others. Hear us, O God.

As we sow Seeds of Hope, we pray for St. John Lutheran in Westhoff. Guide them to new opportunities and abilities to draw younger people into the congregation. We pray also for St. Peter’s in Elgin that they may continue the path you have shown them through continued vision and direction, as you use them as an instrument of grace in their community. We pray for St. Paul’s – Karnes City and St. Paul’s – Nordheim as the congregations grow their ministries through the St. Paul’s Squared opportunity. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

With all churches in the Southwestern Texas Synod we pray for each other and also for ELCA member congregations such as those in the Nebraska Synod, Elizabeth Beitel Memorial Lutheran Church in San Antonio, and Gustavus Adolphus College. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Knit together the communion of saints, and bind us to Christ, our head. Through the diversity of gifts present in our communities, help us to overcome our limitations and increase our understanding of ourselves and others. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Reveal your will as you receive our prayers, and conform our ways to your ways; through the saving work of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.
Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

**OFFERING** An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

*(ELW p. 186)*  

**Create in Me a Clean Heart**

**OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray. Generous God, you feed us with the harvest of the land, and you provide for our every need. Receive our gifts of money, imagination, and labor, and transform them into a feast that welcomes all, in Jesus Christ, our host and our guest. Amen.


**GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord 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.

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. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. 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:
THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O God of the universe.
Your mercy is everlasting
and your faithfulness endures from age to age.
Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.
Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.
Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.
Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness
to the land of milk and honey.
Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.
Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.
Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.
In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and 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.
With this bread and cup
we remember our Lord’s passover from death to life
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.
O God of resurrection and new life:
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Bless this feast.
Grace our table with your presence.
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.
Breathe new life into us.
Send us forth,
burning with justice, peace, and love.
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places,
with the earth and all its creatures,
with sun and moon and stars,
we praise you, O God,
blessed and holy Trinity,
now and forever.
**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

    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**

Christ has prepared the feast.
Come to the table where all are welcomed home.
The assembly is seated.

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

DISTRIBUTION – All are WELCOME at the table of the Lord.

This meal gives you strength for your journey of faith & life. Go forward as the body of Christ in your family, community and the world. Children or anyone choosing not to commune, but wishing to be blessed, may indicate this by folding their arms across their chest. Anyone who is unable to come forward may indicate to an usher that you wish to receive communion where you are seated.

TABLE BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Tender and merciful one,
at your feast, you fed us who brought nothing,
turning our emptiness into joy.
Filled with your abundant grace,
send us now to be ministers of reconciliation,
mending broken hearts, working for justice,
and striving for peace among all people,
in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.
Sending

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

BLESSING

God, who fills the creation with abundance,
Christ, who spreads his arms in forgiveness,
Holy Spirit, who draws ever near to us,
◆ bless you and bring you to life everlasting.

Amen.

SENDING SONG (ELW p. 774)  What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Remember the poor.
Thanks be to God.

DOXOLOGY (ELW p. 884)  Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow

For Prayerful Consideration


For those in the military: Nick Adams, Anthony Alvarez, Allen Bowles, Justin Chandler, Justin Elkins, Rodney Foreman, Jamaica Goodhue, Jacob Jones, Felipe Leal, Jr., Garrett Peterson, Jon Wayne Schulz, James Skinner, Chris Sustaita, Kassie Thompson, John Vasquez, and Delmiro Villanueva

Anniversary & Birthday: Nolan & Mary Louise Jonas (Mar 26), Majorie Pierce (Apr 3)
Welcome!

We have all come to St. Paul’s by different paths, and from various walks of life. Through worship, study, prayer and fellowship we each seek to deepen our faith, comfort and encourage one another and dedicate our lives more fully to sharing Christ in our homes, our community and the world. All are welcome at St. Paul’s. We are eager to know you, and we invite you to get to know us. **If you are unable to hear, require a bulletin, or need any other assistance**, please signal an usher.

Coming Events

Let’s join together and PARTICIPATE

Lent & Easter Worship Schedule

**Weekly Lenten Worship, “Dwelling In the Word”, each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.**

Soup & Sandwiches will begin at 6:30 p.m.

**March 27: Luke 24:22-24**

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’

**April 3: Luke 24:29**

But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them.

**April 10: 24:24:30-31**

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

**Maundy Thursday, April 18 – 7:30 p.m.**

**Good Friday, April 19 – 7:30 p.m.**

**Easter Celebration**

Christian Fellowship & Education – 9:30 a.m.

Worship – 11:00 a.m.
Texas Lutheran University Spring Choir Tour
A message of peace, hope and love fills the Texas Lutheran University Choirs spring tour program, What the Light Shines Through. The Treble Choir, Kantorei Chamber Choir and the Texas Lutheran University Choir will perform works by various composers, including two newly commissioned works. Performances in the SWT Synod will be: **March 29 at 7 p.m.**, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 400 N Esplanade St., Cuero, TX 77954 AND **April 2 at 7 p.m.**, Chapel of the Abiding Presence, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 W Court St., Seguin, TX 78155. The event is free and open to the public; no tickets are required.

"For all of you who aren't sure,
It is possible to be gay and Christian.
It's also possible to believe in God and science.
It is possible to be pro-choice and anti-abortion.
It is equally possible to be a feminist and love and respect men.
It's possible to have privilege and be discriminated against, to be poor and have a rich life, to not have a job and still have money.
It is possible to believe in sensible gun control legislation and still believe in one's right to defend one's self, family, and property.
It's possible to be anti-war and pro-military.
It is possible to love thy neighbor and despise his actions.
It is possible to advocate Black Lives Matter and still be pro police.
It is possible to not have an education and be brilliant.
It is possible to be Muslim and also suffer at the hands of terrorists.
It is possible to be a non-American fighting for the American dream.
It is possible to be different and the same.
We are all walking contradictions of what "normal" looks like.
Let humanity and love win."
--- unknown author
Situation

Heavy rainfall last week caused rapid snow melt that has resulted in major flooding across at least four states. So far, three people have died and hundreds of homes and business have been impacted. Mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders remain in place. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 200 miles of levees have been compromised in four states and historic flood levels have been recorded at 42 locations across six states. Though water is receding, in many areas, more rain is anticipated along with warmer weather that may increase water levels from snow and ice melt.

Response

Lutheran Disaster Response, through congregations, synods and our affiliates across Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin and Missouri is responding to this disaster.

The road to recovery will be long, and Lutheran Disaster Response will be there to accompany those affected through every phase of this disaster. Your gifts are needed to launch recovery efforts. Gifts designated for "U.S. Flooding" will be used to assist those affected by the floodwaters, until the response is complete.

Mail donations to: ELCA P.O. Box 1809 Merrifield, VA 22116-8009