



# Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church

1187 C.R. 128 & U.S. Rt. 20

Fremont, Ohio 43420

Pastor Tim Miller

93.1FM

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Faithchurch@amplex.net

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**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**

**January 29, 2023**

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Setting 3 with Holy Communion

\*Congregation please stand as you are able.

## **Introduction**

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

## **Prelude:**

*Blessed Are the Peacemakers*

**T. Birchwood**

**Welcome & Announcements:** Joys and Concerns

Signing of the Pew Register by all present.

## **\*Opening Hymn:**

*We Are Called*

**ELW 720**

## **GATHERING**

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

## **\*Greeting**

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

**C:** **And also with you.**

## **\*Confession and Forgiveness**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who makes all things new,  
whose mercy endures forever.

**C: Amen.**

P: Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P: Holy One, source of our renewal,

**C: we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,  
and cannot free ourselves.**

**We have not practiced your righteousness.**

**Our hearts have turned away from you.**

**For the sake of the world you so love,  
forgive us,**

**that we may be reconciled to one another  
for the glory of your holy name.**

**Amen.**

P: Thus says our God:

“The former things have come to pass  
and new things I now declare.”

God's mercy makes us new.

We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## \*Canticle of Praise

Assisting minister



Glo - ry to God in the highest, 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**

P: Let us pray.

**C: Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## **WORD**

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

### **First Reading:**

**Micah 6:1-8**

*With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has "wearied" Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God's service.*

R: A reading from Micah, the sixth chapter.

<sup>1</sup>Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

<sup>3</sup>"O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses,  
Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

<sup>6</sup>"With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Responsive Reading:**

**Psalm 15**

<sup>1</sup>LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup>**Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right,  
who speak the truth from their heart;**

<sup>3</sup>they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends;  
they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor.

<sup>4</sup>**In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those  
who fear the LORD. They have sworn upon their health and  
do not take back their word.**

<sup>5</sup>They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take  
bribes against the innocent. Those who do these things shall  
never be overthrown.

**Second Reading:**

**1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

*According to the world's standards of power and might, the message of the cross seems stupid and offensive. Yet this word reveals the paradoxical way God has chosen to work power and salvation through weakness, rejection, and suffering. Hence the message of the cross becomes true wisdom and power for believers.*

R: A reading from 1 Corinthians, the first chapter.

<sup>18</sup>The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*Gospel Acclamation**



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the fifth chapter.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

P: <sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **Children’s Sermon**

### **Sermon**

**\*Sermon Hymn:**

*Arise, Your Light Has Come!*

**ELW 314**

## **\*Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **\*Prayers of Intercession**

R: Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

R: Cultivate humility in your church. In gatherings of every size, teach us to boast only in the cross. Shape your church to be people of kindness, generosity, and justice. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: The foundations of the earth bear witness to your faithfulness; the mountains and hills echo with your holiness. When we mistreat your creation, show us the error of our ways. Inspire us with reverent awe to honor all you have made. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: You make foolish the wisdom of the world. Raise up honorable leaders who seek justice, love mercy, and pursue peace. Frustrate plans that are corrupt, wicked, and self-seeking. Prosper the work of peacemakers. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Bless all whom the world rejects. Accompany those who are regarded as foolish, weak, low, and despised; reveal your power and presence at work where it is least expected. Give your life, strength, and wisdom to all in need, *especially those we name at this time (Pause for people to be named)*. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: As with your people Israel, remind this congregation of your saving acts. Remind us how your faithfulness brought us through difficulties and sustained us despite our weaknesses. Establish the cross as the center of our life together. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: Praise to you for your blessed saints in every time and place. Trusting you accompanied them in poverty, persecution, and in every trial, we trust you abide with your people always. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

R: We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

**C: Amen.**

### MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

### \*Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

(10:30) Sr. Choir:    *Golden Light, Serene and Bright*        **G. Peterson**

### Offering

#### \*Offering Prayer

P: Liberating God,

you break the bonds of injustice  
and let the oppressed go free.

Receive these offerings in thanksgiving  
for all your works of merciful power,  
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.

You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## **\*The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

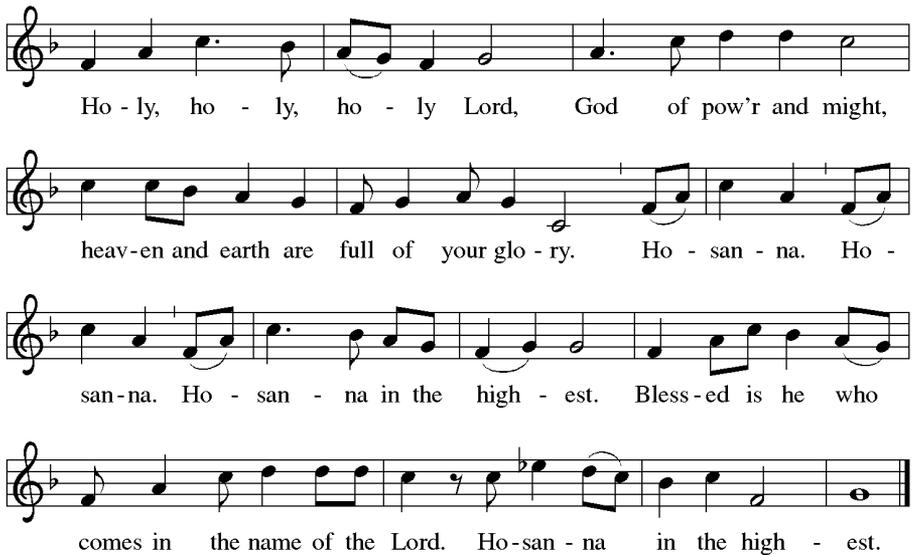
**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

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.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;  
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;  
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.  
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'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who  
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

## **\*Thanksgiving at the Table**

P: Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal:  
you we praise and glorify, you we worship and adore.

P: You formed the earth from chaos;  
you encircled the globe with air;  
you created fire for warmth and light;  
you nourish the lands with water.  
You molded us in your image,  
and with mercy higher than the mountains,  
with grace deeper than the seas,  
you blessed the Israelites and cherished them as your own.

That also we, estranged and dying,  
might be adopted to live in your Spirit,  
you called to us through the life and death of Jesus.

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.

Together as the body of Christ,  
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes:

**C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

P: With this bread and cup we remember your Son,  
the first-born of your new creation.  
We remember his life lived for others,  
and his death and resurrection, which renews the face of the earth.  
We await his coming,  
when, with the world made perfect through your wisdom,  
all our sins and sorrows will be no more.

**C: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

P: Holy God, holy and merciful one, holy and compassionate,  
send upon us and this meal your Holy Spirit,  
whose breath revives us for life,  
whose fire rouses us to love.  
Enfold in your arms all who share this holy food.  
Nurture in us the fruits of the Spirit,  
that we may be a living tree, sharing your bounty with all the world.

**C: Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

P: Holy and benevolent God,  
receive our praise and petitions,  
as Jesus received the cry of the needy,  
and fill us with your blessing,  
until, needy no longer and bound to you in love,  
we feast forever in the triumph of the Lamb:  
through whom all glory and honor is yours, O God, O Living One,  
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy church, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

### **\*Lord's Prayer**

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C: 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**

P: Come and taste the joy of God!

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace.

### **Distribution of Communion**

*Communion will be continuous. The ushers will invite you to come forward by the center aisle. You will be handed the bread with the words, "The Body of Christ given for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!". Step to the Communion Assistant and take the cup. They will speak the words, "The Blood of Christ shed for you." You may respond with "Amen" or "Thanks be to God!" Empty cups may be placed in the basket as you return to your seat by the side aisle.*

*If you prefer gluten- free bread, please let the Pastor know. If you prefer grape juice, please let the Communion Assistant know. If you prefer not to receive or have children who have not yet received, please let Pastor Tim know and he will offer a blessing.*

### **Communion Hymns:**

**ELW 482 *I Come with Joy***

**ELW 470 *Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether***

**ELW 717 *Let Justice Flow like Streams***

### **\*Post Communion Blessing**

**P:** May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C:** Amen.

### **\*Prayer After Communion**

P: Holy One,  
we thank you for the healing  
that springs forth abundantly from this table.  
Renew our strength to do justice,  
love kindness,  
and journey humbly with you.

**C: Amen.**

### **SENDING**

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

### **\*Blessing**

P: The God who faithfully brings forth justice  
and breaks the oppressor's rod  
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,  
today and always.

**C: Amen.**

**\*Closing Hymn:      *The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve*      **ELW 551****

### **\*Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Follow the way of Jesus.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*Postlude:      *The Greatness of the Lord*      **R. Miles****

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**WE GATHER IN JESUS' NAME TO ANSWER GOD'S CALL:** “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God” (Micah 6:8). Welcome.

**ALTAR FLOWERS** today are given in memory of Bill Fox by Becky Fox.

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** is scheduled for today, January 29, 2023 beginning at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please plan to attend.



**THE FAITH LUNCH BUNCH**

The Lunch Bunch is announcing that our next visit to Ole Zim's Wagon Shed will be on Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon. Two sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board in the coat room. Please sign up for either the Family Style or Order-Off-the-Menu by Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup> so that the counts can be called in for our reservation. Thanks to the thirty people who joined us this past month. Good food and great Faith friends! What a winning combination! God bless.

**CHRIST CARE INVITE**

Our Saturday Christ Care group would love to have you join us beginning Saturday, February 4 at 9:15 am, as we dig into Jen Wilkin's book, *None Like Him*. She shares here how God is different from us in 10 ways and why that matters. Adam and Eve were told by the serpent that if they ate the fruit from the 'forbidden tree' they would become like God. We were not meant to be God. We have been given limitations by His design. Calling us to embrace our limits as a means of glorifying God's limitless power, Jen invites us to celebrate the freedom that comes in letting God be God. If this piques your curiosity and desire to get to know God more intimately, let Noelle Leutenegger know so we can be ready to wonder about and soak in God's limitless power, and spend time with others of God's children in praise to him and outreach to others. We are so looking forward to our time together.

**2023 GIVING STATEMENTS** are available in the narthex. Please pick yours up at your earliest convenience.

**2023 OFFERING ENVELOPES** are available in the narthex. If you have not picked yours up yet, please do so.

**COMING SOON - Faith Filled Travelers Trip Preview Party Potluck – Sunday, February 12, 2023** This is for anyone interested in learning about the new trips and will be in the Fellowship Hall from 3 – 6 pm. There is an announcement with more information on the bulletin boards in the coatroom area and near the Fellowship Hall. Feel free to contact Yvonne Vogel with any questions (419 307-1774).

**THE CHOSEN, SEASON 1- DVD SERIES DURING LENT**

*The Chosen, Season 1* DVD series will be shown beginning Wednesday, March 1st at 5 p.m. sharp. Discussion will follow, if interested.

If you are interested in the 40 day devotion, *The Chosen, 40 days with Jesus, Book One*, sign up on the blue sheet on the bulletin board. The book is there if you'd like to look through it. We'll need to order these soon, **please sign up by January 29th**. If you are unable to sign up in the church, send Cheryl Paeth a text (419-205-3659) or email the church ([faithchurch@amplex.net](mailto:faithchurch@amplex.net)) with your name and # of books.

Invite friends and family members. If they want a devotional, sign them up, too.

*The Chosen* will continue through Lent and afterward, if there is interest.

**TEEN ARMOR OF GOD STUDY**

This group is now **online** through an app named Band. Weekly questions are submitted for review and application of the Armor of God throughout life. Send Cheryl Paeth a text 419-205-3659 if you are interested in being linked into the Band app. Include your name in your text. Keep in God's word, teens. God is good in all things, events, and your purpose. Put on your Armor of God every day: Belt of Trust, Breastplate of Righteousness, Shoes of the Gospel, Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation, Sword of the Spirit, and *above all, prayer.*

**LINDA WOESSNER'S NEW ADDRESS:** Apt. 728, Otterbein Senior Living, 20311 Pemberville Rd., Pemberville, OH 43450.

**REMINDER...** *When Sandusky County is under a Level 3 Snow Advisory the church will be closed. This includes Sunday services as well as all weekday events, meetings and activities for that day. If we are under a level 1 or 2 snow emergency, the church will be open and if it's on a day of worship, we will have worship.*

**THE ANNUAL CHICKEN AND BISCUIT DINNER AT ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Rocky Ridge, will be held on Sunday, February 19, 2023, from 11:30 AM until 1:30 PM. Dine in to enjoy a meal of chicken with gravy over a biscuit, green beans, and lots of homemade desserts to choose from. There will also be a Carry-Out option available. Free-will donations accepted. St. John's is located at 450 N. Rocky Ridge Rd., Oak Harbor.

**CORE VALUES** –

F aithful fellowship  
A ffirming worship  
I ntentional service  
T ransformative growth  
H onoring tradition

**MISSION STATEMENT** – Equip all to become God's agents of change in the world.

**VISION STATEMENT** – A community freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

**TAGLINE** – Gather, Grow and Go

**NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH** – At Faith Lutheran Church, we honor tradition by immersing people into faithful fellowship, affirming worship, intentional service, and transformative growth, to equip all to become God's agents of change in the world, so all may gather, grow and go, creating a community freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.



**PRAYING DAILY**

**For healing and hope:** Terry Bolen, Pat Copley, Carroll Diekman, Mary Ann Diekman, Bob Fought, Bob Goehring, Della Humbarger, Cinda Jones, Denny Krumnow, Nancy Mylander, Robert Schneider, Dorothy Swedersky, Janet Tressler, Carnetta Weber, Norma Willey, Jerie Young. Mark

Hausch, Darryl & Cate Knipp, Dean Perkins.

**For our Military:** Troy Halfhill, Daniel Linder, Katie Olmstead, Tony Rozzi, Christopher Templeton, & Joshua Tooman.

**For our Bishops:** Bishop Rev. Amon Kinyunyu, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, and NWOS Bishop Daniel Beaudoin and Staff

**For our partner congregation in Bumila, Tanzania**

**And its pastor:** Pastor Peter Magasi

**ASSISTING TODAY**

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Organist:** Darla Brown

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** Gary/Bonnie Overmyer    Ruth Gerber/Andrew Tooman

**Lector:**                                  Mason Harder    Karly Paeth

**Acolyte:**                                 Andrew Tooman    Leah Wasserman

**Communion:**    B. Fox/S. Harder    C. Trick & Noelle Leutenegger

**Counters:** Niki Wasserman\* & Nicole Weiker

**Fellowship Time Host:** Pastor Tim & Angi Miller

**Altar Guild:** Brenda Tooman & Kim Smith

**ASSISTING NEXT WEEK**

**Pastor:** Rev. Tim Miller    **Organist:** Darla Brown

**Sr. Choir Director:** Darla Brown

**8:00 a.m.**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** A. Waggoner/Weickert    Ryla Smith

**Lector:**                                     Ryla Smith    Karly Paeth

**Acolyte:**                                 Robert Fought    Karly Paeth

**Communion:**    B. Fox/M. Fought    C. Trick & Cheryl Paeth

**Counters:** Alexis Brickner\* & Judi Neill

**Fellowship Time Host:** Adult II Sunday School Class

**Altar Guild:** Judi Neill, Heidi Tooman & Ann Waggoner

**FAITH ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK OF – Jan. 29 to Feb. 5**

**Sunday**

Jan. 29-----8 & 10:30 a.m.   Worship/Holy Communion  
                  **9:15 a.m.**   **Congregational Annual Meeting**  
                  9:15 a.m.   Sunday School  
                  Online    Teen Bible Study

**Monday**

Jan. 30-----8 a.m.   Conversation & Prayer @ Frisch's  
                          10 a.m.   Valley View Tea Time with God  
                          7:30 p.m.   Dartball - Away vs. Kingsway

**Tuesday**

Jan. 31-----

**Wednesday**

Feb. 1-----6:30 p.m.   Bell Choir  
                          7:30 p.m.   Senior Choir  
                          7:30 p.m.   Praise Choir

**Thursday**

Feb. 2-----9-3 p.m.   Fellowship & Sew Day  
                          3 p.m.   Christ Care

**Friday**

Feb. 3-----

**Saturday**

Feb. 4-----9:15 a.m.   Christ Care

**Sunday**

Feb. 5-----8 & 10:30 a.m.   Worship/Holy Communion  
                          9:15 a.m.   Sunday School & Fellowship Time  
                          Online    Teen Bible Study

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2023: ATTENDANCE 116; OFFERINGS: \$3,172.50

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## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**January 29, 2023**

**FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

### **Upside-Down Blessing**

How do you know that you are blessed? Our consumer-driven culture primes us to believe blessedness is based on our bank accounts. Or perhaps we learn that we are blessed if we are in good health, or if our work is meaningful, or if our social or family lives are fulfilling. Social media hashtags depict blessing as the result of good fortune. And health, work, family, and social connection can all be good things! But the beatitudes turn our assumptions about blessedness on their head.

Jesus reminds us that instead, blessedness is our beginning. “Blessed” is our primary identity in God. We are loved and favored by God before we do anything to earn it, before the circumstances of our lives begin to define us. Our level of blessedness has nothing to do with us and everything to do with God’s abundant love and grace. This is true especially when it feels like we are anything but blessed.

We are loved, held, and brought near to God, even in our pain and sorrow and everything that makes us feel like we are less worthy, less loved, less important. In fact, it is in those places that God draws nearest to us, reminding us that we are loved and whole and worthy of blessing. Then everything we do flows from that identity of blessedness. We are freed to bless others—with our words, our actions, our whole lives. We are invited to engage the world through the upside-down lens of the kingdom of God. We are given new eyes to see God’s presence in this world—not just among the important, the powerful, the popular, and the loud, but among those the world would rather ignore, disregard, or shame.

Whenever the world pronounces condemnation, God declares, “Blessed.” Whenever the world excludes, God welcomes. Whenever the world scorns, mocks, or causes harm, God promises new life in the kingdom of heaven that is ever drawing near.