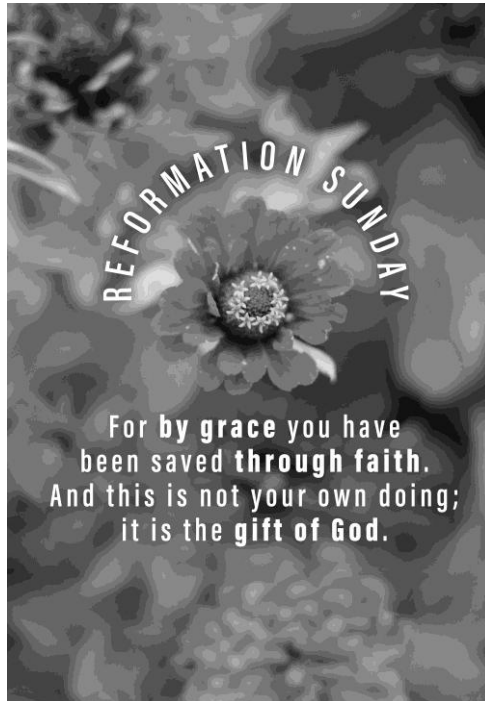


*Welcome to St. Paul's
The Lord Bless You as You Worship!*



***Reformation Sunday
October 25, 2026***

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
135 Hamilton Street, Penn Yan, NY 14527
315-536-8165
email: office@stpaulspennyan.org
website: www.stpaulspennyan.org
Rev. Lori Nickoloff, Pastor

Enter to Listen, Exit to Serve

WORSHIP NOTES

Thank you for worshipping with us this morning. We're glad you're here! May you experience God's love through the words you hear and sing, the meal you eat, and the fellowship of God's people.

Prayer Requests If you have a prayer request, please give a note to the ushers or send an email to Pastor Lori.

Face Masks Just a friendly reminder...please wear a mask in the building if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19/experiencing any kind of respiratory or flu-like symptoms. Masks are available on the table in the narthex in case you forget yours at home. Thank you!

Holy Communion All are welcome to share in Christ's meal of forgiveness and grace. Children who do not yet commune are welcome to come forward for a blessing. (If you feel your child is ready to receive or have additional questions, please speak with Pastor Lori.) Please come forward at the direction of the ushers. Wine is in the outer rings of the tray. Grape juice is in the center of the tray. Gluten-free bread is available; please indicate your need to the pastor.

Pew Cushions Are available on the pew in the back of the sanctuary.

Hearing Assistance Individual hearing devices are available at the back of the sanctuary. Please return the device at the end of worship so they can be sanitized.

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We Worship God

Welcome

Prelude

“Nun komm der Heiden Heiland”

Johann Pachelbel

*The prelude is a time for people to become quiet, to meditate and pray, and to prepare their hearts and minds to worship God. You are invited to pray this prayer to help you transition from the cares and activities of daily life to worshipping the Living God: **God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may celebrate your glory and worship you in spirit and truth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.***

Please rise in body or spirit

Call to Worship

P: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All: And blessed be his kingdom, now and forever.

P: There is one Body and one Spirit;

All: There is one hope in God's call to us;

P: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

All: One God and Father of all.

P: Blessed be God who sustains and protects his Holy Church.

**All: And blessed be God who guides and confirms us in our Faith. Amen.
Alleluia!**

— written by the Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel, in [Liturgy of God's Word for Reformation Sunday](#).

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Let us put aside our good works and remember that we do sin and fall short of the glory of God.

(Pause for reflection and self-examination)

P: Lord of all,

All: the demands of your righteousness are too hard for us to fulfill alone, so we rush off with this excuse and ignore your law. You forgive our iniquity and remember our sin no more, and we abuse this freedom as if it were a license to selfishness, self-indulgence and self-

righteousness. You give us the gift of grace: yet we make it cheap without serious repentance. Forgive us the sins we know in our heart. Save us Lord from the sins we hide.

P: God does show us God's own righteousness, and divine forbearance. Through the work of the Holy Spirit given to us, we may come to know the truth and be made free. Jesus Christ sets us free from our slavery to sin. Our sins are forgiven. Through his death and resurrection a place is made for us in the household, and we may be known as children of God. To the glory of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Gathering Hymn:

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

#504

The musical score is written for four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. It features a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is primarily in the Soprano and Tenor parts, with the Alto and Bass parts providing harmonic support. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across lines.

1 A might - y for - tress is our God, a sword and shield vic -
 2 No strength of ours can match his might! We would be lost, re -
 3 Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land all threat-'ning to de -
 4 God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide, no thanks to foes, who

to - rious; he breaks the cruel op - pres - sor's rod and
 ject - ed. But now a cham-pion comes to fight, whom
 vour us, we trem - ble not, un - moved we stand; they
 fear it; for God him - self fights by our side with

wins sal - va - tion glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe
 God him - self e - lect - ed. You ask who this may be?
 can - not o - ver - pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage;
 weap-ons of the Spir - it. Were they to take our house,

has sworn to work us woe! With craft and dread - ful might
 The Lord of hosts is he! Christ Je - sus, might - y Lord,
 in bat - tle we'll en - gage! His might is doomed to fail;
 goods, hon - or, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched a - way,

he arms him - self to fight. On earth he has no e - qual.
 God's on - ly Son, a - dored. He holds the field vic - to - rious.
 God's judg-ment must pre - vail! One lit - tle word sub - dues him.
 they can - not win the day. The king-dom's ours for - ev - er!

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: EIN FESTE BURG, Martin Luther
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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Greeting

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

All: And also with you.

Hymn of Praise:

Praise the Lord! O Heavens

#823

1 Praise the Lord! O heav'ns, a - dore him; praise him, an - gels, in the height;
2 Praise the Lord, for he is gra - cious; nev - er shall his prom - ise fail.

sun and moon, re - joice be - fore him; praise him, gleam - ing stars and light.
God has made his saints vic - to - rious; sin and death shall not pre - vail.

Praise the Lord, for he has spo - ken; worlds his might - y voice o - beyed;
Praise the God of our sal - va - tion; hosts on high, his pow'r pro - claim;

The musical score is written for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano accompaniment. It features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The melody is primarily in the soprano part, with the bass part providing harmonic support. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes, often mirroring the vocal lines. The lyrics are printed below the vocal staves, with line numbers 1 and 2 indicating different verses or parts of the hymn.

laws which nev - er shall be bro - ken for their guid - ance he has made.
 heav'n and earth, and all cre - a - tion, laud and mag - ni - fy his name!

Text: *Foundling Hospital Collection*, London, 1796
 Music: AUSTRIA, Franz Joseph Haydn, 1732–1809

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

All: Amen

— posted on the website of [St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church](#).

Please be seated

We Hear God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

A: O Lord, your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

All: Give us grace to receive your truth in faith and love, and strength to follow on the path you set before us; through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the

Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

Psalm 46

A: God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress.

All: Though the earth trembles, and mountains slide into the sea, we will not fear.

A: Waters may rise and roar, and mountains shake at their surging; but the God of hosts is with us--our stronghold, the God of Israel.

All: Even if nations are in chaos, and kingdoms fall, God's voice resounds; the earth melts away.

A: Yahweh is with us; the God of Israel is our stronghold.

All: Come! See the deeds of the Most High, the marvellous things God has done on earth; all over the world, God has stopped wars--breaking bows, splintering spears, burning the shields with fire.

A: "Be still! and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted upon the earth."

All: The Most High is with us; our stronghold is the God of Israel.

Romans 3:19-28

Now we know that, whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human will be justified before him by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed and is attested by the Law and the Prophets, the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his

divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to demonstrate at the present time his own righteousness, so that he is righteous and he justifies the one who has the faith of Jesus. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? That of works? No, rather through the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

A: Word of God, Word of life.

All: **Thanks be to God!**

Please rise in body or spirit

Gospel Acclamation

God's Word is Our Great Heritage

#509

The musical score is written for four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. It is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The melody is carried by the Soprano and Tenor parts, while the Alto and Bass parts provide harmonic support with chords. The lyrics are: "God's word is our great her - i - tage and shall be ours for - ev - er; to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief en - deav - or." The score consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system covers the first line of lyrics, and the second system covers the second line. The music concludes with a final cadence in the key of D major.

God's word is our great her - i - tage and shall be ours for - ev - er;

to spread its light from age to age shall be our chief en - deav - or.

Through life it guides our way; in death it is our stay. Lord, grant while

time shall last your church may hold it fast through-out all gen-er-a-tions.

Text: Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783–1872; tr. Ole G. Belsheim, 1861–1925, alt.
 Music: EIN FESTE BURG, Martin Luther, 1483–1546

The Gospel

P: The Gospel according to John.

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

John 8:31-36

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

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

Please be seated

Sermon

Rev. Matthew Nickoloff

Following the sermon, there is a time of silence for reflection and quiet meditation. Our liturgy is made up not only of words, gestures, and music, but also moments of silence.

As the hymn begins, the assembly stands to sing.

Hymn of the Day:

Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word

#517

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) using a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is primarily in the soprano and tenor parts, with the alto and bass parts providing harmonic support. The lyrics are arranged in three systems, each corresponding to a line of music. The first system contains three verses of the hymn. The second system continues the lyrics, and the third system concludes the hymn with a final line of text.

1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in your word; curb those who
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, your pow'r make known, for you are
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, send peace and

by de - ceit or sword would wrest the king - dom from your Son
Lord of lords a - lone; de - fend your ho - ly church, that we
u - ni - ty on earth; sup - port us in our fi - nal strife

and bring to naught all he has done.
may sing your praise e - ter - nal - ly.
and lead us out of death to life.

Nicene Creed

A: With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

All: 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

A: Confident in the gracious and ever-widening mercy of God, let us pray for the world, the body of Christ, and all who yearn for wholeness of life. Liberate us from our bondage to sin, God of freedom, that your church would continually be reshaped and reformed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

A: Show your righteousness, God of justice, that all who are oppressed and marginalized, forgotten, and cast aside would be given voice by elected leaders and compassionate citizens. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

A: Make wars to cease in all the world, God of peace, that all strife, violence, and bloodshed give way to reconciliation, compassion, and new life. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

A: Take us by our hand, God of companionship, when we are paralyzed by our fears and unable to step out in boldness. Give us courage to walk confidently with you. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

A: Give your stillness, God of calm, to all who are facing illness, surgery, or any uncertainty of health (especially). May they know that their times are in your ever-healing hands. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Write your law of love on our hearts, God of all, that we, like our forebears in faith, would be unswerving in our witness to your grace that is ours through the gift of faith. Lord, in your mercy,

All: hear our prayer.

P: Listen to us when we call upon you, most merciful God, and grant us grace to entrust our lives and our world to your unfailing love, through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

— from the website of [St. James Lutheran Church](#) in Bettendorf, Iowa.

Sharing of Peace

P: The Lord of peace give you peace at all times and in all ways.

All: And also with you.

Please turn to the people near you to offer a gesture of peace and the greeting, "God's peace be with you!" You are also encouraged to turn to the back of the sanctuary and greet the worshippers on Zoom with a wave or gesture of peace.

Please be seated

Offering

*This month our Local Hunger Offering will be given to **The Sharing Shed**.*

Offertory Music *“Let us go into the house of the Lord”*

Dave and Jean Perry

Please rise in body or spirit

Offertory Hymn:

verse 3 of Praise and Thanksgiving

#689

*Father providing food for your children,
by Wisdom’s guiding teach us to share
one with another, so that, rejoicing
with us all others may know your care*

Offertory Prayer

A: Blessed are you,

All: **O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

We Share God’s Meal

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

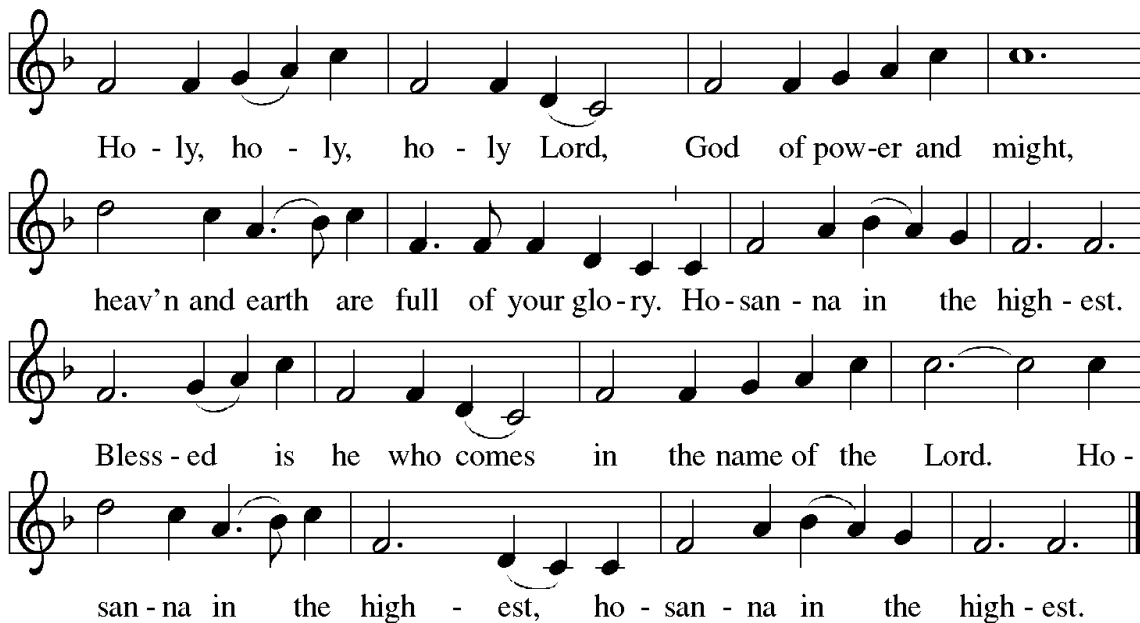
All: **We lift them to the Lord.**

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

All: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: We praise you for your glorious Word that spoke, and it was so. With just a word you create a universe of breathtaking beauty and tenderly breathe life into human beings made in your image. When we do not listen to you and follow our own desires, you do not leave us to our own devices but seek us out to make covenant, and you keep your word to us even when we break ours to you. You free us from bondage and give us the Word in your law, though we prefer idols of our own making and leaders of our own exaltation. Still you send prophets to preach to us the words of eternal life. Therefore we

praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

P: On 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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection and ascension, we wait his coming in glory. Pour out the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom with you and Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

All: Amen

The Lord's Prayer

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

All: **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: Satisfy us with your love, O God, so that we might be glad all our days. We gather around your table with gratitude for what is and has been, and hope for what will be. Fill us with your mercy in this meal of bread and wine, and send us to be servants to others in your kingdom of love. Come join the feast!

All: **Amen.**

Lamb of God



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

Hymns During Communion:

The Church's One Foundation

#654

Lift High the Cross

#660

We Walk by Faith

#635

The Church's One Foundation

1 The church's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
 2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, yet one o'er all the earth,
 3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der this world sees her op - pressed,
 4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion and tu - mult of her war,
 5 Yet she on earth has u - nion with God, the Three in One,

she is his new cre - a - tion by wa - ter and the word.
 her char - ter of sal - va - tion one Lord, one faith, one birth:
 by schisms . . rent a - sund - er, by her - e - sies dis - tressed,
 she waits the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for - ev - er - more;
 and mys - tic sweet com - mu - nion with those whose rest is won.

From heav'n he came and sought her to be his ho - ly bride;
 one ho - ly name she bless - es, par - takes one ho - ly food,
 yet saints their watch are keep - ing; their cry goes up: "How long?"
 till with the vi - sion glo - rious her long - ing eyes are blest,
 Oh, bless - ed heav'n-ly cho - rus! Lord, save us by your grace,

with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.
 and to one hope she press - es with ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
 and soon the night of weep - ing shall be the morn of song.
 and the great church vic - to - rious shall be the church at rest.
 that we, like saints be - fore us, may see you face to face.

Lift High the Cross

Refrain

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim till

all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.

1 Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where our cap - tain trod,
 2 All new - born ser - vants of the Cru - ci - fied
 3 O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree,
 4 So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be:

Refrain

our king vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.
 bear on their brows the seal of him who died.
 as thou hast prom - ised, draw us all to thee.
 praise to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry!

We Walk by Faith



1 We walk by faith and not by sight; with
 2 We may not touch your hands and side, nor
 3 Help then, O Lord, our un - be - lief; and
 4 For you, O res - ur - rec - ted Lord, are
 5 And when our life of faith is done, in



gra - cious words draw near, O Christ, who spoke as
 fol - low where you trod; but in your prom - ise
 may our faith a - bound to call on you when
 found in means di - vine: be - neath the wa - ter
 realms of clear - er light may we be - hold you



none e'er spoke: "My peace be with you here."
 we re - joice, and cry, "My Lord and God!"
 you are near and seek where you are found:
 and the word, be - neath the bread and wine.
 as you are, with full and end - less sight.

Text: Henry Alford, 1810–1871, alt.

Music: SHANTI, Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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Table Blessing

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

All: Amen

Prayer After Communion

A: Pour out upon us the spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of those whom you have fed with one heavenly food; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

We Leave to Serve

Announcements

Benediction

P: Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

All: Amen

Litany for Reformation Sunday

R: Rejoice in the freedom of God, a freedom which sweeps you into an ever-changing reformation of self and the world around you. A freedom that is an invitation to intimacy with God. A freedom that demands action. A freedom that makes you different: Christ-like, rather than world-like. A freedom that enables you to step out of the norm into the extraordinary. Grasp this freedom and be a prophet

All: **who seeks and speaks wisdom,**

R: an advocate

All: **who slays the dragons that threaten the weak,**

R: a teacher

All: **who inculcates the wonder of God,**

R: a witness

All: **who testifies with power and insight,**

R: a public servant

All: **who sows harmony,**

R: a visionary

All: who sings songs of hope.

R: Rejoice in the freedom of God that makes you true to yourself; everyday becoming the person God made you to be.

— From *Reformation Worship*, copyright Lisa Frenz. Posted on **Lisa's Liturgies**. <https://sites.google.com/site/lisasliturgies/home>

Having heard to word and shared the eucharist, we are sent to live our baptism through word and deeds, making known the love of Christ, and working for justice and peace in our families, communities and world.

Please rise and turn to follow the flame as it exists the sanctuary.

Sending Hymn:

Thy Strong Word

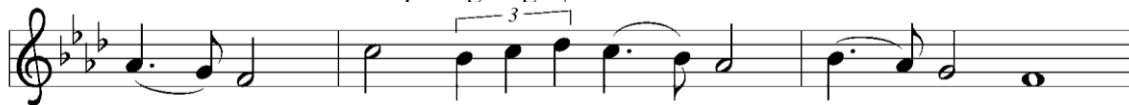
#511



1 Thy strong word did cleave the dark - ness; at thy
 2 Lo, on those who dwelt in dark - ness, dark as
 3 Thy strong Word be - speaks us righ - teous; bright with
 4 From the cross thy wis - dom shin - ing break - eth



speaking it was done. For cre - at - ed light we
 night and deep as death, broke the light of thy sal -
 thine own ho - li - ness, glo - rious now, we press toward
 forth in con - qu'ring might; from the cross for - ev - er



thank thee, while thine or - dered sea - sons run.
 va - tion, breathed thine own life - breath - ing breath.
 glo - ry, and our lives our hopes con - fess.
 beam - eth all thy bright re - deem - ing light.



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Praise to thee who light dost send!



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia with - out end!

5 Give us lips to sing thy glory,
 tongues thy mercy to proclaim,
 throats that shout the hope that fills us,
 mouths to speak thy holy name.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 May the light which thou dost send
 fill our songs with alleluias,
 alleluias without end!

6 God the Father, light-creator,
 to thee laud and honor be.
 To thee, Light of Light begotten,
 praise be sung eternally.
 Holy Spirit, light-revealer,
 glory, glory be to thee.
 Mortals, angels, now and ever
 praise the holy Trinity!

Text: Martin H. Franzmann, 1907–1976
Music: EBENEZER, Thomas J. Williams, 1869–1944
Text © 1969 Concordia Publishing House

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Sending

A: Go now to love and serve in the way of Jesus Christ.

All: **Amen**

Postlude

“Mighty Fortress”

Joel Raney

Hymn Notes “Lord, Keep us Steadfast in Your Word” ELW 517

Martin Luther wrote this hymn in 1541-1542 and it was published in Joseph Klug's "Geistliche Lieder" 1543. Taken at face value, it is a straightforward Trinitarian hymn praying to the Father for steadfastness in the Word and curbing the power of those against the Word, praying to Christ Jesus, whose strong defense allows us to pray and praise, and praying to the Holy Spirit who brings peace and unity while preserving us from the final strife as described in Revelation.

The first verse comes across as somewhat fierce, even vicious, but understanding the context for its writing is of interest. In 1541 King Ferdinand I was defeated by the Turkish army under Sultan Sulieman and Germany feared being overrun. It was reported that the Pope supported Francis I of France making a pact with Sulieman. So, the first verse's origin was Luther's prayer for God to fight off the Pope and the Turks. Fortunately, the Church recognized the deeper and more general application of the first verse in our individual lives as we resist the world's temptations and counterfeits.

ERHALT UNS HERR (Preserve us Lord) is in E minor, which well supports the serious nature of the text. "Geistliches Lieder" (spiritual songs) became the foundation for the Babst Hymnal of 1545, the most complete and carefully edited hymnal in Luther's lifetime.

The tune is ideal for congregational singing; its long note upbeats and concluding phrase notes give ample time for singers to breathe and read ahead into the next phrase. Its simple harmonies serve the melody, which is arch like. In each phrase the melody moves forward focusing on the ending note of the phrase.

As mentioned in the past, the octave is often a reference to earth and heaven. Here, the melody reaches the seventh, one note lower than the octave. The texts here are "kingdom", "holy church", and "in our final strife." The note D (the seventh) is harmonized with the brighter relative G major and can be heard as hopefulness in our reaching and striving for Heaven, which, in the limits of this melody, remains one step higher.