



**Christ
Lutheran**
CHURCH

2610 Campbell Street • Valparaiso,
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clcvalpo.org • office@clcvalpo.org



**March 10, 2024
LDA Sunday**

We Welcome You to Christ Lutheran Church! We are a community of people sharing God's love through Christ and growing together in faith.

We celebrate all the ways we are made in the image of God, seeking to see God in everyone. We honor and respect each person's age, ethnicity, family composition, gender identity, gender expression, life history, mental well-being, physical ability, relationship status, sexual orientation, skin color, and socioeconomic standing. Together, we strive to love and serve our neighbor and all creation, including working toward racial and social justice. We would love to walk with you on this creative adventure* of faith, grace, and love.

** The first sermon ever preached at Christ Lutheran was titled "A Call to Creative Adventure."*

ABOUT WORSHIP

We gather to worship weekly to hear and remember our shared hope: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ makes all things new, even us.

You will find everything that happens in worship printed in this bulletin, with hymns found in the red hymnals ("ELW") in the seats in front on you.

If you have a prayer request, note it on a yellow card from the seatback holder and pass it to an usher; the other side is for any information you would like about Christ Lutheran. Please feel welcome to remain seated as necessary during the service.

CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME IN CHURCH!

God's people come in all shapes and sizes – it is a gift to the whole community when the smallest of us are present! Sitting with parents and learning to treasure times of worship is the foundation for helping build a growing faith in a child's life. There's some noise and movement that we expect from little ones - feel free to make use of the **activity bags, doodle pads, bookshelf in the overflow area and cry room at the back of the sanctuary** as needed. Whatever sacrifice of energy and effort you make to include your children in worship is multiplied as the good news of God's love takes root in their lives!

WHEN NURSERY CARE IS NEEDED DURING WORSHIP

A fully equipped and staffed Nursery is available for both infants and toddlers during all services. The Nursery is located west of our gathering area in **Room 110**.

RESTROOMS

Men's and women's restrooms off the Gathering Area and Church Hall have changing tables, as does the all-gender restroom near the nursery. A second all-gender restroom is through the Vestry off the East hallway, past the Welcome Center.

HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

Our services are on video, and occasional photographs are taken for our website and e-mail news. If you have concerns, please speak to a church staff member.

Hearing assistance devices are available to those who need help with listening to the service and are located at the entrance to the sanctuary, or please see an Usher for assistance.

A Reminder: Please turn off all cell phones during worship services.

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

*Freu Dich Sehr, O Meine Seele
(Rejoice Greatly, O My Soul)*

Böhm

WELCOME

If you are joining us for the first time, welcome! We'd love to meet you, or if there's anything you'd like to know about the ministry of Christ Lutheran Church, please consider [filling out a Connection Card online](#) (you can point your phone at the graphic to the right) or using a yellow Connection Card in the pew holders.



***Prayer requests** can be posted to the livechat or use a yellow Prayer Request (on the backside of the Connection Card) and give them to an usher.*

*If you are worshipping with us via livestream, consider **preparing your space for Communion**: light a candle (if appropriate and safe), and have a plate with bread/cracker/tortilla and a cup for wine or grape juice (or an empty cup as a sign Jesus is sufficient in one or both elements).*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who writes the law on our hearts,
who draws all people together through Jesus.
Amen.

Held in God's mercy, let us confess our sin
in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God,
**we confess that we are caught in snares of sin
and cannot break free.**
**We hoard resources while our neighbors
are hungry and cold.**
We speak in ways that silence others.
We are silent when we should speak up.
We keep score in our hearts.
We let hurts grow into hatred.
**For all these things and for sins only you know,
forgive us, Lord.**
Amen.

Here is a flood of grace:
Out of love for the whole world,
God draws near to us,
breaks every snare of sin,
washes away our wrongs,
and restores the promise of life through † Jesus Christ.
Amen.

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.

Children: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

God, rich in mercy,
whose light reveals
the truth of things,
the judgement we bring on ourselves:
we thank you that
you sent your Son
to save and not condemn;
in his self-giving love
may life abundant reign;
through Jesus Christ, who was lifted up for us.
Amen.

WORD

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

CHILDREN'S TIME

The assembly is seated as children are invited for a time together.

READING: Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

⁴From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” ⁸So Moses prayed for the people. ⁹And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

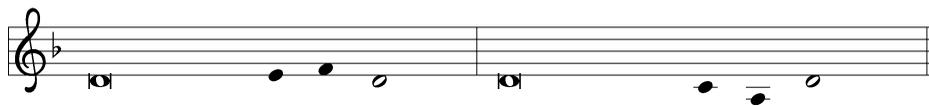
PSALM: Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22

The congregation is invited to sing the psalm refrain when indicated (R). Verses will be chanted alternately by the leader and the people.

Refrain



Psalm Tone



READING: Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.

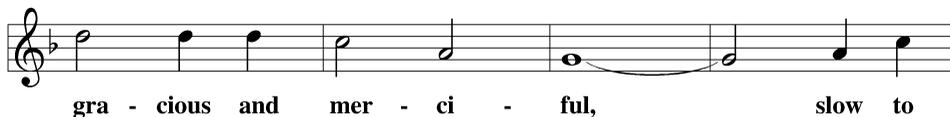
¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.



HOLY GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

The Holy Gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

The assembly is seated. Time for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW #323 *God Loved the World*

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

1 God loved the world so that he gave his on - ly
2 Christ Je - sus is the ground of faith, who was made
3 If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your
4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son for - gives all
5 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly

Son the lost to save, that all who would in
flesh and suf - fered death; all who con - fide in
trou - bled heart can cheer: Christ Je - sus res - cues
sins that you have done, and jus - ti - fied by
Spir - it, Three in One! To you, O bless - ed

him be - lieve should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.
Christ a - lone are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.
us from death; that is the firm - est ground of faith.
Je - sus' blood, your bap - tism grants the high - est good.
Trin - i - ty, be praise now and e - ter - nal - ly!

Text: *Gesangbuch*, Bollhagen, 1791; tr. August Crull, 1846–1923, alt.
Music: ROCKINGHAM OLD, Edward Miller, 1731–1807, adapt.

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.

**Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.*

PRAYERS

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, your love unites. Give vision to the global church and foster cooperation in mission. Increase inter-religious understanding and ecumenical dialog. Make your church a sanctuary for all fleeing persecution, disaster, and war. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creating God, your love enlivens. Restore balance to the earth's fragile habitats. Preserve wilderness lands, rainforests, and wildlife. Cleanse oceans and rivers, tend to Lake Michigan, the Little Calumet and Kankakee Rivers, and Salt Creek. Make us good stewards of the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Righteous God, your love liberates. We give thanks for those who courageously witness to your liberating love, especially Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, whom we commemorate today. Free all people from the evils of racism, religious strife, and hatred. In Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, bless the witness of churches and call all people to justice and compassion.

Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Merciful God, your love heals. Care tenderly for all whose loved ones perished from pandemic disease in every nation. Strengthen health care workers, first responders, and caregivers. Relieve all who live with chronic illness and pain. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Incarnate God, your love enlightens. Open our hearts and minds to fresh understandings of our faith. Deepen our love for you and for one another. Teach us to pray for our enemies. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Abiding God, your love saves. We remember those who died in the faith, including Gregory, and trust that they are made alive in Christ. We give thanks for your promise that we also will be raised to newness of life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

STEWARDSHIP SHARING “*Who, me?*”

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*We invite those worshiping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the chat, and for those in person we turn to offer them our greeting of peace before sharing a sign of peace with one another: **Peace be with you!***

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

OFFERING

This congregation serves our neighbors, community, and the world through the participation and support of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with Valpo New Creation Men’s Shelter/Resale Shop

*newcreationempowers.org + www.facebook.com/newcreationresaleshop
and Gabriel’s Horn www.gabrielshelter.org*



If you wish to give electronically, use the QR code or browse to our secure on-line portal at clcvalpo.org/give or use [our CLC app](http://ourCLCapp) (download at clcvalpo.org/app).

OFFERTORY (8:00 am):

Fugue in A Minor

Pachelbel

OFFERTORY ANTHEM (10:30 am):

Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley

Larkin

Jesus walked this lonesome valley, he had to walk it by himself; Nobody else could walk it for him, he had to walk it by himself. Jesus went to stand his trial, he had to stand it by himself; Nobody else could stand it for him, he had to stand it by himself. I must go and stand my trial, I have to stand it by myself; nobody else can stand it for me, I have to stand it by myself.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

Jesus, you are the bread of life
and the host of this meal.

**Bless these gifts that we have gathered
that all people may know your goodness.
Feed us not only with this holy food
but with hunger for justice and peace.
We pray this in your name.
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...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS

(An ancient practice invites us to make the sign of the cross in honor of Jesus at the words "Blessed is he.")

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. 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.

TABLE PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

Children: The Spirit makes us one. We pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Bread for the journey.

A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

Thanks be to God!

The assembly is seated.

DISTRIBUTION

*The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:*

The body of Christ, given for you.

Amen (*receive the bread*)

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen (*receive the cup*)

In-person distribution: When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. WINE is lighter-colored and GRAPE JUICE is dark; they are received via individual cups in the trays. USED GLASSES are placed in the basket located near the ramp. GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE, please indicate to the server that you require this.

LAMB 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, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMNS: ELW #666 *What Wondrous Love Is This*

1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What
 2 When I was sink-ing down, sink-ing down, sink-ing down, when
 3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to
 4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and

won - drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this
 I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when I was sink - ing down
 God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,
 when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,

that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
 be - neath God's right-eous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my
 who is the great I AM, while mil - lions join the theme, I will
 I'll sing God's love for me, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?
 soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.
 sing, I will sing, while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.
 on, I'll sing on; and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

Text: North American folk hymn, 19th cent., alt.
 Music: WONDROUS LOVE, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; arr. Paul J. Christiansen, 1914–1997, alt.
 Arr. © 1955 Augsburg Publishing House, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

ELW #779 *Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound*

1 A - maz - ing grace!— how sweet the sound— that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; he will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to

now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5
 Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1851–1921, alt.

When all have returned to their places, the assembly stands.

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

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Generous God,
at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace.

As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

Brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

BLESSING

Beloved,
we are God's own people,
holy, washed, renewed.
God bless you and keep you,
shower you with mercy,
fill you with courage,
and ✠ give you peace.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW #783***Praise and Thanks and Adoration***

1 Praise and thanks and ad - o - ra - tion, Son of God, to you we give,
 2 Hold me ev - er in your keep - ing, com - fort me in pain and strife;



for you chose to serve cre - a - tion, died that sin - ers all might live.
 through my laugh - ter and my weep - ing, lift me to a no - bler life.



Dear Lord Je - sus, guide my way; faith - ful let me day by day
 Draw my fer - vent love to you; con - stant hope and faith re - new



fol - low where your steps are lead - ing, find ad - ven - ture, joys ex - ceed - ing!
 in your birth, your life and pas - sion, in your death and res - ur - rec - tion.

Text: Thomas H. Kingo, 1634-1703; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: FREU DICH SEHR, *Trente quatre pseautmes de David*, Geneva, 1551
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Children join the pastors to send us in mission

DISMISSAL

Children: Go in peace. Share your bread.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Worship Leaders

	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>
Acolyte	Sam Venstrom	Atley Lewis
Lector Deaconess	Carrie Sovola	Deaconess Kristin Lewis
Prayer Assistant	Deaconess Amy Smessaert	Deaconess student Kris Delaney
Communion Assistants	Deaconess Lisa Polito Deaconess Kat Peters	Deaconess/Rev. Rebecca West-Estell Deaconess Karen Hernes
Ushers	Deaconess Ann Bass Bill Iltzsche	Deaconess Carole Ford Deaconess Diana Iltzsche Deacon Rodney West-Estell
Sound/Light	Lance Nolting	Jeff Peiffer
Video/Livestream	-----	Tony Reinhold
Pastors	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Preacher	Deaconess Adrainne Gray	

Deaconess Adrainne Gray was consecrated a Lutheran Diaconal Association (LDA) deaconess and ordained an ELCA deacon in 2017. She served four years as an ELCA missionary with her partner Ben (a seasoned photojournalist), and their two children; Sylvia and James Everett in the Holy Land. Later, she served three years as a communicator for The Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland.

Today, Adrainne is the Director of Discernment for the LDA with a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and works remotely from her home in Atlanta, GA.

Adrainne's interests and passions are deep and vast, but if she had to narrow down her interests to what piques her lately, it would be Afro-surrealism literature and film, care of the actively dying, eco-burials, HIV/AIDS activism for marginalized populations, gardening, travel, yoga and cultural intersectionality and finding Christ in all of the above.

Director of Music Ministries Brian Bartusch

Worship Participants Karl Stefans, cantor
Sanctuary Choir

Communion Baker Chrystal Hernes

COMMEMORATIONS

Week of March 10, 2024

March 10

Harriet Tubman, died 1913; Sojourner Truth, died 1883; renewers of society

Harriet Tubman, born into slavery, helped about 300 others to escape slavery until the institution was abolished. Sojourner Truth, whose birth name was Isabella, was freed after slavery was abolished, and discerned a call to be a preacher. Taking the name Sojourner Truth, she set out on an evangelistic journey, where people found her testimony to be deeply moving.

March 12

Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, died 604

Gregory was born into a politically influential family. At one time he held political office and at another time he lived as a monk, all before he was elected to the papacy. Gregory's work was extensive. He influenced public worship through the establishment of a lectionary and prayers to correlate with the readings. He established a school to train church musicians. Gregorian chant is named in his honor. He wrote a treatise underscoring what is required of a pastor serving a congregation. He sent missionaries to preach to the Anglo-Saxons who had invaded England. And at one time he organized distribution of grain during a shortage of food in Rome.

Stewardship Snippet

“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” – Ephesians 2:10

We have been created to love God and neighbor and to live a life marked by good works and radical generosity. During the season of Lent we are reminded to devote our time and resources to go the second mile for the sake of the good news.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden.**

We are **thankful** for:

- the spectacular beauty of the changing landscape of forests, lakes, mountains and glaciers
- churches that are advocating and implementing measures to redress climate change that is dramatic here and throughout the world
- those who have opened their doors and hearts to people migrating to these lands
- the support for justice, peace and interfaith work that comes from these countries

We **pray** for:

- the poor and marginalized who struggle in these rich countries
- personal and investment practices that support environmental sustainability
- growing openness to becoming more multi-ethnic, multi-faith societies
- those who are affluent that they will contribute to making the world and their societies more just for all
- a Church that is prepared to be a voice in the struggle for indigenous people rights.

Lifted Up for Us

“So must the Son of Man be lifted up,” Jesus says. There is a double meaning to this. Just as God told Moses to raise a bronze serpent on a pole to effect healing for the Israelites (Numbers 21:4-9), Jesus will be lifted on the pole of the cross. The image of Jesus crucified reveals how human power tries to dehumanize those who threaten the status quo or violate the norms decreed by those at the top of society’s ladder. It is a horror to consider this happening to anyone, but so much more when the victim is the perfect Holy One, God in the flesh. It confronts us with humanity’s rejection of God, in how we treat other human beings and in how we dehumanize ourselves by following our sinful impulses—what Ephesians calls “the passions of our flesh” (2:3).

This, though, is not the only meaning of Jesus being “lifted up,” for “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” The cross is more than the humiliation of Jesus; it is also his glorious exaltation. The crucifixion of Jesus is his coronation as Lord of all, who rules by grace and mercy. By defeating death in the resurrection, he will indeed disrupt the status quo of shame, violence, and greed through the power of love, truth, and peace.

This was prefigured in the story of poisonous serpents. When the people looked on the emblem of their sin, a bronze model of the snakes that poisoned them after they grumbled against the Lord, they were healed. So, too, when we turn to the Crucified One, we do not find condemnation but salvation. Beholding the Savior lifted up on the cross by our sin, we receive mercy and healing. In the death of Jesus, God forgives and embraces us with eternal life. In the proclamation, prayer, song, and sacraments of our assembly, we remember and affirm that the crucified yet exalted Christ extends saving love to us and to the world.

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Portions from *Prayers for an Inclusive Church* by Steven Shakespeare.