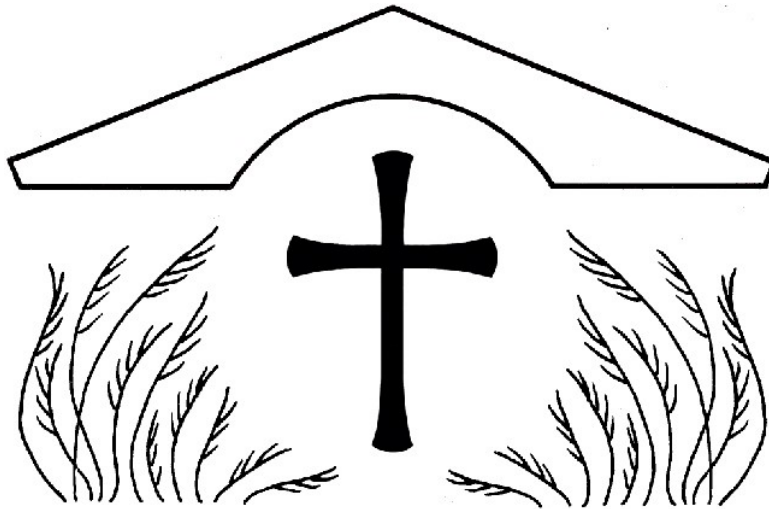


# ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## First Sunday in Lent

February 18, 2024



### Ministers

Rector

Deacon

Senior Warden

Junior Warden

Minister of Music

Cantor

Administrative Assistant

### The People of the Parish

The Rev. Christy Laborda Harris

The Rev. Kate Sefton

Jean Farmer

Meg Nalley

Miles McKenzie

Kristina Ibarra

Jun Kim

**Welcome to the holy season of Lent!** Lent is the 40 day period from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday. Lent is a time of return, a time of refocusing our lives and hearts. It is a time of austerity with extra prayer and meditation to prepare ourselves to appreciate the full joy and glory of Easter and the good news of God's power over death. Traditionally we do not use altar flowers during this season, giving the altar a simpler and more sedate appearance. And we save our joyful shouts of "Alleluia" until Easter. We make these changes in order to set this time aside and mark it as different.

Many people think that Lent is a fearful dark time, but we need to remember that we know the end of the story. We are loved by the God who is stronger than death. There is nothing to fear! We are not observing Lent because we were bad or in order to make God love us. We are observing Lent because we love God and we want to experience God's love for us even more fully.

"Walking in the Wilderness" is a Lenten service written by Pat Bennett and published by the Iona Community.

### The Gathering of the Community

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

Be Still and Know

*please stand*

Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I

am. Be still and know. Be still. Be. Be.

As desired Final

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**Presider** Driven by the Spirit Jesus went out to inhabit a liminal place. For forty days and nights, homeless and weary, famished and footsore, he wandered and watched and wrestled ...

**People** **For forty days and nights, companioned and comforted by animals and angels, he traversed and tested and tempered... And then, knowing who he was, seeing where he must go, understanding what he should do, Jesus, filled with the Spirit, returned from the uncharted place to do the work of the Kingdom.**

**Presider** Jesus, by your example you challenge us to make this season a journey of discovery;

People **As we leave comforting landmarks behind to inhabit and explore our own uncharted places, help us to discern who we are and embrace what we might become.**

Presider Jesus, by your words and actions you show us how to watch and wait and wrestle;

People **As we listen now to those familiar stories and savor afresh your wit and wisdom, help us to recognize where we are and envisage where we need to move to.**

Presider Jesus, you offer us your company in the known and the unknown places;

People **As we touch hands with you now through story and song, and in bread and wine, help us to better understand the threads of our lives and see how to weave them with yours into the patterns of God's Kingdom.**

#### CONFESSION

Deacon God of the liminal places, you draw us into the quietness of the desert so that we can encounter ourselves...

People **But we confess that all too often we stubbornly cling to false images rather than face the necessity of change.**

Deacon You call us into the emptiness of the desert so that we can confront our desires...

People **But we confess that all too often we continue to choose our own comfort rather than serving the needs of others.**

Deacon You drive us into the dangers of the desert so that we can engage with your Kingdom...

People **But we confess that all too often we prefer the smooth roads of safety over the perilous pathways of justice.**

**Forgive us, O God, wherever we have chosen to be, or do, or dare less than you have asked of us; and as we walk on in the desert with you, help us watch and wrestle with these things so that we might choose differently in future.**

## ABSOLUTION

God forgives you.  
Forgive others;  
Forgive yourself.

God strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal. **Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Word

### THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**  
Let us pray.

God of trackless desert, whose Son walked untamed in league with beasts and spirits, whose kingdom is not distant but breaking in among us: give us time and space to find a new identity to let go of control and walk the pilgrim way; through Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation.  
**Amen.**

### A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS (9:8-17)

*please be seated*

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 25:1-9

- 1 To you, O God, I lift up my soul;  
my God, I put my trust in you; \*  
let me not be humiliated,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**
- 2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; \*  
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**
- 3 Show me your ways, O God, \*  
and teach me your paths.**
- 4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, \*  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
in you have I trusted all the day long.**
- 5 Remember, O God, your compassion and love, \*  
for they are from everlasting.**
- 6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; \*  
remember me according to your love  
and for the sake of your goodness, O God.**
- 7 Gracious and upright are you; \*  
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**
- 8 You guide the humble in doing right \*  
and teach your way to the lowly.**
- 9 All your paths are love and faithfulness \*  
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.**

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER (3:18-22)

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you-- not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL READING

Mark 1:9-15

*please stand*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

SERMON

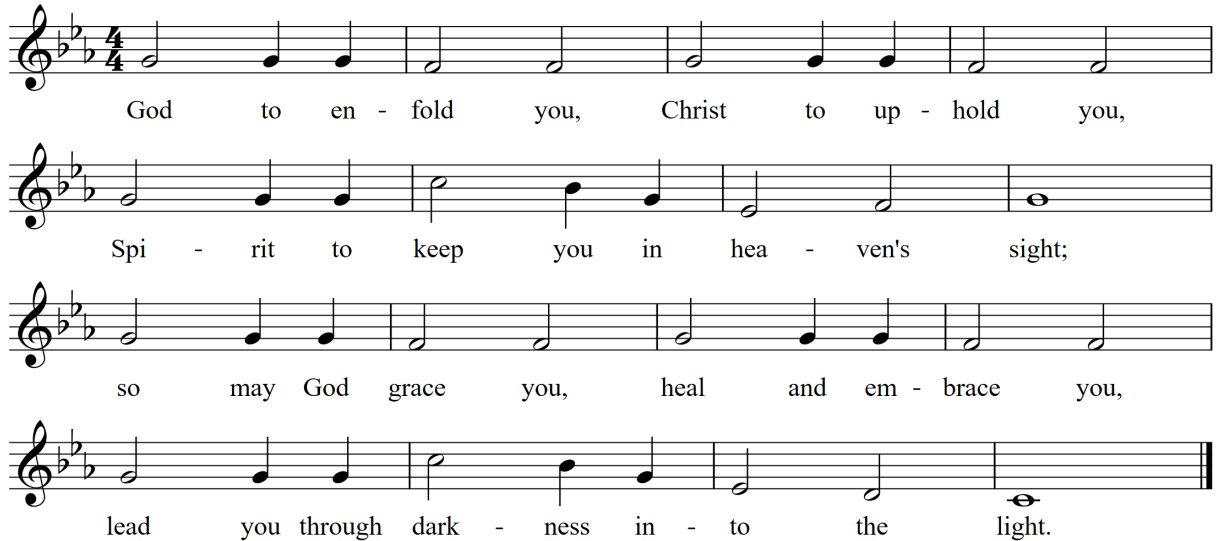
The Rev. Christy Laborda Harris

*please be seated*

*A period of silent reflection follows the sermon*

## HYMN

## God to Enfold You

*please stand*


God to en - fold you, Christ to up - hold you,  
 Spi - rit to keep you in hea - ven's sight;  
 so may God grace you, heal and em - brace you,  
 lead you through dark - ness in - to the light.

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## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In penitence and faith let us make our prayer, asking for mercy and grace, saying: God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For people in all faiths, that they may triumph over evil and grow in grace, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For the leaders and citizens of the nations, that you will guide them in the ways of mercy and truth, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For all those in danger and need, the sick, the suffering, and the oppressed, that they may not be forgotten, and that we may see our way to reaching out in love and hope, God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**

For the sick in body, mind and spirit, that they may know your power to heal, especially those we name now either aloud or in our hearts... God, revealed in the world, **Walk, watch, and wait with us.**





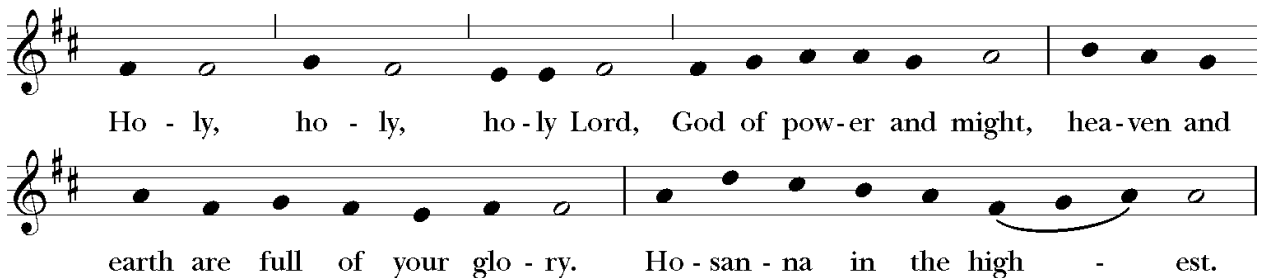
## EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Presider        The Lord be with you.  
People         **And also with you.**  
Presider        Lift up your hearts.  
People         **We lift them to the Lord.**  
Presider        Let us give thanks to the Lord.  
People         **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Like a tent in the wilderness the table of God stands open and ready as a place of sanctuary and safety, of hospitality and healing. So come, all you who are tired and travel-stained, footsore and famished; come with your fellow travelers and find companionship and comfort; for here, Jesus – who knows what it is to wander, watch and wrestle in desert places – waits to meet us and welcome us in, offering us rest and restoration, solace and strength, for the journey still to come.

Before going out into the wilderness of the Garden, Jesus sat down to eat and drink with his friends. To show them the challenge of the way ahead, and offer them gifts for that journey, he took bread – sustaining and wholesome – gave it to his friends and said, “Take, eat: This is my body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.” He poured wine – earthy and warming – and said “Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me.” He shared these gifts as signs of his continuing presence with them throughout time to come.

**And now, remembering that moment, and recognizing that its promise is also for us in this time and place, we too break bread and pour wine to share with one another. And in that action, we recognize and affirm with joy that Christ is present with us now, and throughout time to come; and we join our voices with those of all creation in the unending song of praise:**



The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the hymn: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, hea - ven and". The second staff contains the melody for the second line: "earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est." The notes are simple quarter and eighth notes, with a final long note on "est." indicating a sustained sound.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, hea - ven 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.

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God of the thresholds, of in between times and spaces, send down upon us now, and on these gifts of bread and wine, that same Spirit who drove Jesus into the desert, that we too may be tempered and strengthened by your Presence and refreshed and renewed through your love.

Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

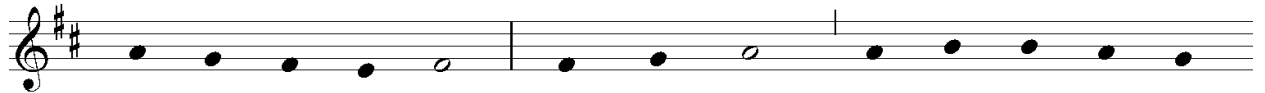
As Christ teaches us, we pray,

**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 for ever. Amen.**

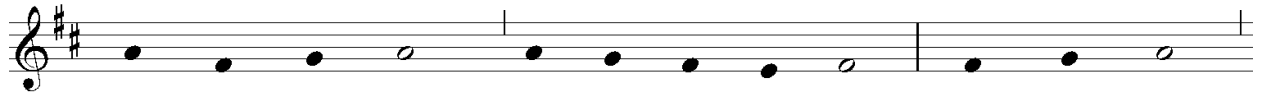
#### BREAKING OF THE BREAD



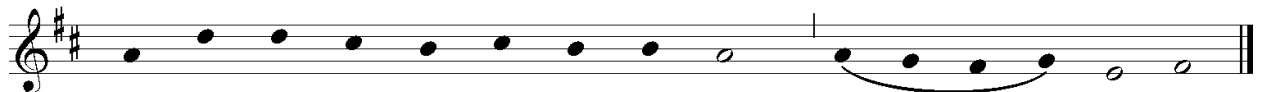
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:



have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the



sins of the world: have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,



you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

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The tent side is open, the table is set, and God waits for us to come in from the desert for a while and be refreshed. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, **You are welcome at this table.**

All are welcome at the Lord's table. You are invited to come forward when the ushers indicate and stand or kneel at the communion rail. Please extend your hands together to receive the bread. Our bread is gluten free. To receive the chalice, please help guide it to your lips. We are no longer intincting (dipping the bread). If you do not wish to receive the chalice, cross your arms and the chalice bearer will still say the words but not expect you to sip. If you prefer not to receive either bread or wine and would like a blessing, please cross your arms across your chest.

COMMUNION HYMN

Open My Heart

**Open my heart, open my heart.**

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COMMUNION HYMN

143 The Glory of These Forty Days

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

*please stand*

We thank you God for nourishing us.

**God has called us to journey for a season through the wilderness places; And so, as Jesus did before us, we will set out once more to wander in an uncomfortable landscape and wrestle with its challenges, that through the tempering action of the Spirit, we may emerge ready to do the work of the Kingdom. Amen.**

BLESSING

Look with compassion, O Lord, upon this your people; that, observing this holy season, we may know you more fully, and to learn to serve you with a more perfect will; and the blessing of God the Father, the Son, and be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RECESSIONAL HYMN

150 Forty Days and Forty Nights

*please stand*

DISMISSAL

Let us go forth into the world, journeying with the Spirit.

**Thanks be to God.**

