

St. John's Lutheran Church ELCA

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Pastor—Stacy Malzhan
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Maundy Thursday
April 2, 2026

Office Hours--- Monday - Thursday 9 am - 1 pm
Call for an appointment with Pastor Stacy

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Note: The order of service is backwards from what many of us are used to — beginning with communion and ending with confession. This order follows the experience of the disciples and invites us into unsettled time.

WE GATHER FOR WORSHIP

We gather tonight to tell the old, old story.

**a story of bitterness and betrayal,
of despair, denial and death.**

We gather tonight to tell an even older story
prepared before the worlds began:

**a story of love powerful enough
to rewrite our endings
with the promise of new life.**

In the telling of the story,
in the breaking of the bread,
in the coming of the night,
we draw near once more to Christ.

SONG: *Let Us Break Bread Together* (ELW 471)

WE TELL THE STORY: Mark 14:17-31

Our story begins during the Passover, which Jesus is celebrating with his friends. The celebration is overshadowed, however, by the threats against Jesus. His words have been rejected, and his time is coming to an end. Let us walk again through Jesus' story.

WE TAKE THE BREAD AND CUP: *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*

Invitation to the Table

We stand at this table because it is an echo of another table:

that table in an upper room in Jerusalem

where Jesus sat with his 12 friends,

friends who would betray, deny and fall away from him,

friends he loved and laid down his life for.

**The story of God is always the story of faithfulness,
of going through the hard times together,
of God's "yes" being louder than all our "maybes."**

We remember how it all started, when God created the world,
every precious beautiful bit of creation, God's own artwork, including us:
but we rebelled, and did the one thing we were asked not to do
and we hid from God in the garden.
We were cast out of that garden, but not away from God's heart.

When we were slaves in Egypt, God rescued us,
and fed us with manna in the wilderness, brought forth water from the rock.
God was faithful to us while we made idols and broke commandments.

Again and again God said, "I am your God, and you are my people."
God sent us prophets to call out our disobedience,
and to promise us that God is faithful still.

In time, Christ came to walk among us, to show us just how far God would go
to prove his love for us. Christ read to us, sang with us, healed us, fed us, prayed for us,
cast demons out of us, grew tired like us, and at the end –
at the very end – gave us one last gift.

The Words of Institution

During that last supper, Jesus took the bread, broke it and blessed it, saying
this bread is my body, broken for you, whenever you eat it, remember me.
And after supper he took the cup, and poured it out, saying,
"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many
so that their sins may be forgiven.
As often as you drink it, remember me."

We share in the bread and cup

So we take the bread and cup, tokens of God's everlasting faithfulness.
We pray that the Spirit would be poured out upon them,
to make this simple meal something holy,
something to nourish and sustain our faith,
something that still tastes like hope.
Friends, this is the bread of life and the cup of salvation, for you.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.

DISTRIBUTION

SONGS: *When We Are Tested* (ACS 922) [p. 4]
 Jesus, Remember Me (ELW 616)

When We Are Tested



1 When we are test - ed and wres - tle a - lone,
2 When in the des - ert we cry for re - lief,
3 When we are tempt - ed to bar - ter our souls,
4 When we have strug - gled and searched through the night,



fam - ished for bread when the world of - fers stone,
plead - ing for paths marked by cer - tain be - lief,
trad - ing the truth for the pow'r to con - trol,
sort - ing and sift - ing the wrong from the right,



nour - ish us, God, by your word and your way,
lift us to love you be - yond sign and test,
teach us to wor - ship and praise on - ly you,
Sav - ior, sur - round us with cir - cles of care,



food that sus - tains us by night and by day.
trust - ing your pres - ence, our on - ly true rest.
seek - ing your will in the work that we do.
an - gels of heal - ing, of hope, and of prayer.

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947

Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

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It was the last supper, but not the last meal
that Christ would share with his disciples.
Because yes, our faithlessness would sentence him to the cross
and yes, the God who was bold enough to be human would die,
and yes, the sky would darken and the Temple curtain would be torn in
two.

But God was still faithful.
And three days later, Christ would rise again,
and there would be breakfast.
A first breakfast, cooked fresh right there on the beach,
to prove to us that nothing – not even death
can separate us from the love of God.

God is faithful.
So faithful.
Then, now, and forever.
Amen.

PASTORAL PONDERINGS: “Acts of Love”

WE TELL THE STORY: Mark 14:32-42

We meet up with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, where he found both solace and danger.

WE JOIN WITH JESUS IN PRAYER

To You All Hearts Are Open (ACS 1012) [sung at beginning & end of petition prayers]

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "To You All Hearts Are Open" in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff has a repeat sign at the beginning. The second staff has a fermata over the first measure. The third staff has a triplet of eighth notes and a "Last time" instruction above the final measure.

To you all hearts are o - pen, to
you all de - sires known. To you there are no
se - crets, al - might - y God; we come to you.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus prayed.

**He prayed to his Abba, the Father he knew and loved,
because he was hurting and sad and afraid
and because he trusted.**

So we pray with Jesus. I invite you during the pauses to simply offer the names of those you are praying for, aloud or in silence. After each pause, I will say “in your love, Lord,” and you will respond, “hear our prayers.”

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

WE TELL THE STORY: Mark 14:43-52

Jesus' story continues.

TIME OF CONFESSION

Call to Confession

God, your faithfulness to us is so great,
that we cannot help but fall short.
Yet still we confess our sins,
out of the hope you yourself gave us:
that you still set us a place at the banquet of grace,
feed us with forgiveness and mercy,
no matter what we have done,
no matter what we may yet do.
And so tonight, we confess,
and we put our trust in you.

Prayer of Confession

For every time you asked us to stay with you,
and we wandered away,
forgive us.

For every time we fell asleep on the job of being your disciples,
forgive us.

For every time we boasted of our loyalty,
yet crept away,
betrayed,
or denied you,
forgive us.

For every time we hear this story,
and think “we would do better,”
forgive us.

For every time we meet your faithfulness,
with faithlessness,
forgive us.

God, your love for us is unfathomably deep,
that you would take all our failures,
and still love us as friends.

May we take the gift of your forgiveness,
and share it with the world,
that you made and loved so much.

Amen.

(Time of silent reflection)

Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends, the story we tell tonight is a story of the deepest love; love that would offer forgiveness even to the traitor at its right hand. The bread was for us; the cup, for us; the cross, for us; we are forgiven, not easily, but the hard way. We are forgiven, not cheaply, but wholly. We are forgiven, and we are freed. Praise be to God. **Amen**

WE TELL THE STORY: Mark 14:53-65

Jesus’s story continues.

SONG: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* (ELW 338)

WE TELL THE STORY: Mark 14:66-72

We leave Jesus with his accusers, and come now to the fire, where Peter is trying to keep warm on this terrifying night. We end tonight with Peter’s story — perhaps because it is ours, too.

SONG: *Were You There* (ELW 353)

WE GO OUT TO WAIT FOR THE DAWN: *Benediction*

STRIPPING OF THE ALTAR

STREPITOUS

There will be a loud noise to simulate the closing of the tomb.

(Congregation leaves in silence.)

