

# Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.trinitylutheran.ca](http://www.trinitylutheran.ca)

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March 10, 2024  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Laetare Sunday

## Announcements

**Brown Bag Bible Study** continues on Wednesday, March 13. The five-week study will discuss the week's Lenten lessons and aims to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the season's lessons. Bring your lunch to the noon - 1 p.m. gathering in the Fellowship Hall. Drinks will be provided.

**Next Trinitarian** the next issue of Trinity's newsletter is scheduled for the week of March 18. If you have news, recipes, pictures or even a bad pun, please send it to the church office [trinitywlutheran@gmail.com](mailto:trinitywlutheran@gmail.com). We'd be happy to share it.

**Bring clean socks** to the Palm Sunday service, March 24. You are invited to wave new socks along with palms as we make Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We will collect the socks after the service and donate them to a local shelter.

**Maundy Thursday** is planned for Thursday, March 28. The communion service, which marks Jesus' final time with the disciples before he is taken away by the authorities, begins at 6 p.m.

**Good Friday** service is set to begin at 10 a.m. on Friday, March 29. This is a service of prayer, silence, and reflection to mark Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. In place of a homily, a passion narrative will be offered. There is no communion offered as part of this service.

## **We Remember in our Prayers**

**In Residence:** Cordelle, Dorothy, Katie, Margaret, Sharon, Vern.

**Members:** Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Evelyn, Connie, Judith.

**Friends & Family:** Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Michelle, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank

## **Introduction to the day**

*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.*

ACS # 1018 Deep Peace

ELW # 666 What Wondrous Love is This

ELW # 323 God Loved the world

ELW # 660 Lift High the Cross

### Prayer of the day

O God, rich in mercy,  
by the humiliation of your Son you lifted  
up this fallen world and rescued us from  
the hopelessness of death. Lead us into  
your light, that all our deeds may reflect  
your love, through Jesus Christ, our  
Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God,  
now and forever.

**AMEN**

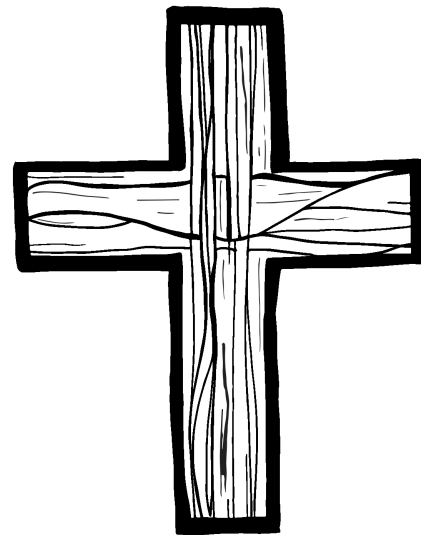
### First Reading: Numbers 21: 4-9

<sup>4</sup>From 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. <sup>5</sup>The  
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.”

<sup>6</sup>Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents  
among the people, and they bit the  
people, so that many Israelites died.

<sup>7</sup>The 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.”

So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And  
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.” <sup>9</sup>So 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.



### Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the Lord, for the | Lord is  
good,

for God’s mercy en- | dures forever.

<sup>2</sup>**Let the redeemed of  
the | Lord proclaim  
that God redeemed them from  
the hand | of the foe,**

<sup>3</sup>gathering them in | from the lands;  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and | from the south.

<sup>17</sup>**Some were fools and took  
re- | bellious paths;  
through their sins they | were**

**afflicted.**

<sup>18</sup>They loathed all man- | ner of food  
and drew near | to death's door.

<sup>19</sup>**Then in their trouble they  
cried | to the Lord  
and you delivered them  
from | their distress. R**

<sup>20</sup>You sent forth your | word and  
healed them  
and rescued them | from the grave.

<sup>21</sup>**Let them give thanks to you, Lord,  
for your | steadfast love  
and your wonderful works | for all  
people.**

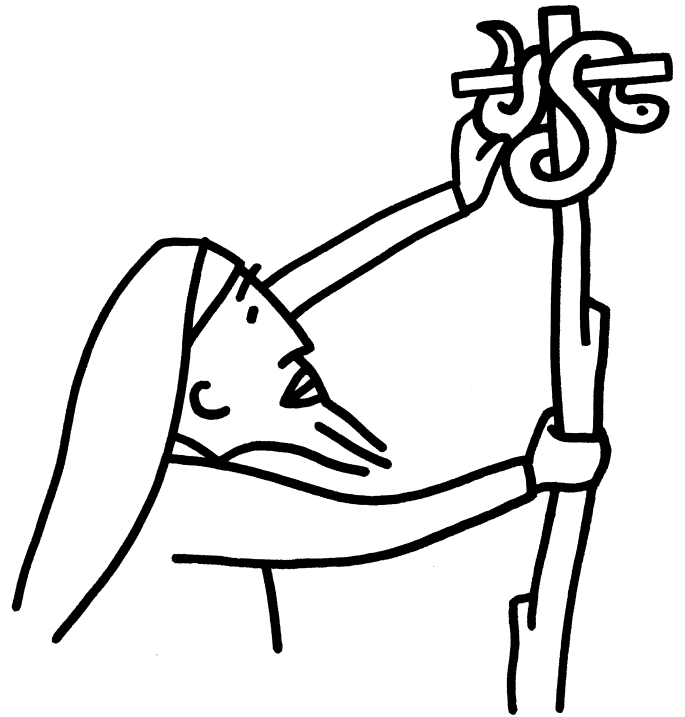
<sup>22</sup>Let them offer sacrifices | of  
thanksgiving  
and tell of your deeds with | shouts  
of joy.

**Second reading: Ephesians 2:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>You were dead through the trespasses  
and sins <sup>2</sup>in 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. <sup>3</sup>All 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. <sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, out  
of the great love with which he loved  
us <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead through  
our trespasses, made us alive together  
with Christ—by grace you have been  
saved—<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and  
seated us with him in the heavenly  
places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the

ages to come he might show the  
immeasurable riches of his grace in  
kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved  
through faith, and this is not your own  
doing; it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not the  
result of works, so that no one may  
boast. <sup>10</sup>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.



**Gospel: John 3: 14-21**

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

<sup>16</sup>“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.

<sup>17</sup>“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. <sup>18</sup>Those 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. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But 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.”

## **Sermon**

### **Light of grace**

God’s grace and peace be with you this day and throughout your journey...

I’d like to share a story about a church in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The church is in the city’s downtown. It has a fifteen-storey tower that illuminates the evening sky as it has for more than seventy years.

There was a time when the tower was only lit two nights each week because money was tight at the church.

On one of those nights, the pastor was working in his office when a woman appeared at the door. She wore a fur coat to protect her from the chill of the winter air ... her wind-blown bleached hair framed her despondent face.

The woman had arrived in the city earlier in the day planning to commit suicide.

She had rented a room at a local hotel and ... as she was closing the curtains ... she saw the lights of the tower. The woman told the pastor that she stood at the window ... feeling called to the source of the lights.

The pastor asked the woman to sit down and the two talked for the next couple of hours ... the woman did most of the talking ... the pastor just listened and gently asked questions about her reasons for wanting to commit suicide.

He then asked her if she would be willing to read two books. ... the books spoke of a meaningful life. The woman eventually agreed.

The pastor handed her one book ... but as he searched his book shelves he realized that the other was at the parsonage.

He asked the woman if she would be willing to go with him as he retrieved the book. After some hesitation, she agreed.

At the parsonage, the woman refused to come inside while he grabbed the book.

As she waited in the car, the pastor's wife came out and got in the backseat. A moment later ... the pastor returned ... got behind the steering wheel ... and handed the woman the second book.

The couple took the woman back to her hotel ... dropping off her and the two books at the lobby door.

The following week, one of the books arrived in the mail. The pastor and his wife were relieved that the woman hadn't committed suicide. A few weeks later, the second book arrived.

The following Christmas, the pastor received a special delivery letter from the woman.

In the letter, she wrote that the reception she received when she arrived at the church office helped her survive a terrible bout of depression.

In fact, she not only survived, but she had entered a training program to become a medical missionary so she could serve and help heal others ... all of this ... she wrote ... was the result of the lights she saw from her hotel room.

For her, those lights were beacons of hope and love.

At the next meeting of the church stewards, the pastor asked for the church budget to include a provision that allowed the tower lights to be on every night of the year.

And the lights have shone ever since.

The church tower ... like church steeples ... evolved from watch towers.

These towers would allow sentries to see danger coming and would be key points to defending against an attack.

At night ... when a light was raised on the tower ... it would serve as a beacon for travelers or others looking for sanctuary ... a safe place in the darkness. It signalled a place to be avoided by the things that lurked in the darkness.

The ideas of light and darkness are central to today's passage from John and in Paul's letter.

Leading into today's passage from John, Nicodemus ... a Pharisee and one of the leaders of the Jews ... had come to Jesus to meet this teacher he had heard so much about.

He arrived under cover of darkness.

After all, it wouldn't do his reputation with the Pharisees and the scribes at the temple any good if it became known that he was seen conversing with Jesus.

Still, he had questions for the rabbi ... questions that only someone sent by God could answer ... even if he has to ask them in secret.

During the course of the conversation, Jesus tells Nicodemus who will be able to see the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells him that a person needs to be born of the water and the spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. But Nicodemus still isn't connecting the dots.

Nicodemus finally asks, "How can these things be?"

Today's passage is Jesus' answer to that question. How can these things be? ... well this is how.

In his explanation to Nicodemus, Jesus talks about living in the light and how those living in the dark hate the light.

Jesus tells Nicodemus an essential truth ... *the* essential truth ... that God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son so that the world can be saved.

Jesus tells him that this light that is coming into the world ... is to be raised like the pole Moses raised ... beckoning people ... healing people ... allowing them to see the things in the dark for what they are ... things that break or prevent loving, respectful relationships.

The passions of the flesh.

John's gospel tells us what the cross holds for us ... Paul's letter this morning tells us what we hold for the world ... the light of grace that we have received through the cross.

This light allows each of us to fully judge the things we do ... and don't do ... to truly assess what we hold close to our hearts ... what we should push away or oppose with all our being.

Such personal and spiritual reflection are at the heart of the Lenten Season.

Biblical scholar Anna Bowden once wrote that during our Lenten journey to the cross ... we are immersed in deep reflection ... our heads down in contemplation of where we have fallen short ... where there are wrongs in the world.

That during the journey, it can be easy to lose sight of its conclusion. Today's passages give us cause to look up from the path.

Today is Laetare Sunday. It is traditionally a day of celebration during this season of sacrifice and scarcity.

By the way, in Latin, the word "laetare" means: "rejoice!"  
... rejoice!

The lessons from John and Paul remind us that we have cause to rejoice at the midpoint of the Lenten sojourn ... it is a moment of light within the darkness of the season.

We are invited to poke our heads up and look toward the cross ... to remind ourselves of what lies at the end of the journey ... to remind ourselves why we make such a journey.

John's gospel ... and Paul's letter ... makes it clear that the journey does not end at the foot of the cross.

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem continues to a tomb ... and to his ascension ... when he is raised up ... like the pole Moses raised before the Israelites.

It is when Jesus truly became a light ... a beacon of love and hope for the world. Jesus' presence in the world illuminates the truth and it also illuminates the sins ... the acts and the thoughts that separate us from that truth.

It is a light that marks the place love holds firm in the world. It is the light of grace ... of hope.

Paul tells the Ephesians that it is our call ... our responsibility ... to carry that light out into the world ... not because it gains us anything ... not because we gain favour or an added measure of grace ... but because God so loved the world ... all of it ... from soil and water ... to animal and person ... and so should we.

Grace compels us into the world ... grace compels us to serve and minister out of love. As Paul wrote, through faith we have grace and the Spirit works within us.

Grace and faith shape our mission to the world just as it should our lives.

Perhaps, during our Lenten reflections, we can adapt Nicodemus' question for our own life.

But instead of "How can these things be?" perhaps we can ask "How can I better love the world?"

Grace calls us to stand with others whose voice has been ignored or silenced ... to heal the wounds inflicted by the world ... and to bring the new life that came through the cross out into the world.

When we love as God loves ... unconditionally ..., we become beacons of grace ... we become a light that calls others into the safety of community ... calling others out of the darkness just like the light in downtown Tulsa did for the desperate woman who considered ending it all.

To do what is true to this light ... without pretense or ego ... to simply love ... is where the Spirit calls us.

**AMEN**

### **Lord's Prayer**

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**

### **Blessing**

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. The God of all grace + bless you now and forever.

**AMEN**

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE PROGRAM**

**AUTHORIZATION**

I hereby authorize **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 1215 Parent Avenue, Windsor, ON N8X 4J1, to cause a cheque to be drawn on my account, each month as a contribution by me to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, as follows:

Total *monthly* contributions to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of:

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00) per month  
Distributed as follows:

|   |          |           |
|---|----------|-----------|
| Current Giving/Benevolence                  | \$ _____ | per month |
| Global Hunger and Development Agency (GHDA) | \$ _____ | per month |
| Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)       | \$ _____ | per month |
| ELCIC World Missions/Volunteers in Mission  | \$ _____ | per month |
| Specify _____                               | \$ _____ | per month |
| Specify _____                               | \$ _____ | per month |
| Specify _____                               | \$ _____ | per month |
| Total Monthly Giving:                       | \$ _____ | per month |

Contributor's name \_\_\_\_\_ Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_

Bank/Trust/Credit Union Name \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Account \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

***This authority may be changed or cancelled by the contributor at any time.***

To ensure accuracy, a sample cheque marked "VOID" must accompany this form.

The transfer of contributions to the ministry of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church will begin in the month *following* receipt of this authorization.