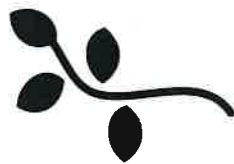




**...a season to dream, explore and recommit to  
faith in action!**



**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER**  
**CELEBRATING LOVE. DOING JUSTICE.**

**Service of the Word**

**Sunday February 22, 2026 – 10:30 AM**

**First Sunday of Lent**

## **PRELUDE**

Chris Henke

## **SILENT PROCESSION**

## **GREETING**

Blessed be God who loves us in our limitations and fosters our loving all whom we meet.

**Blessed be the ones who welcome the Christ in us all.**

## **THE SUMMARY OF THE LAW**

Jesus said, "The first commandment is this: Hear O Israel: Our God is one. Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

## **CONFESSION**

During the season of Lent we take inventory of our lives, as we confess our separation from God, our neighbors, and ourselves. A period of silence for personal prayer and reflection will be observed.

Let us pray together;

**Most merciful God, we confess before you and one another that we have fallen short of the wholeness you desire for us. We have betrayed your trust. We have been less than you created us to be. We have failed to speak out against that which is evil. We have cooperated with systems of injustice. We have built our prosperity upon the lives of others who suffer. We know that you accept and forgive us. We know that you are always ready to heal us of our ignorance and lack of concern for others. Help us to open our hearts to your love, that in so doing we may love ourselves along with our neighbor, strive for justice for all people, and hold forth the vision of what is possible. This we pray as Jesus, our great teacher modeled and who chose life in choosing death. AMEN.**

## **ABSOLUTION**

*The Officiant says to the People:*

God freely offers forgiveness and calls us to turn and live in the joy of God's love. God has given power to all people to forgive one another and themselves. Therefore, know that God forgives us. Therefore let us forgive ourselves and accept others forgiven and be free.

## **COLLECT OF THE DAY**

God is with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

**Spirit of the desert, you drove Jesus to the edge of the world to find his truth and calling: scour our hearts and awaken our hunger that freed from empty clinging we might find ourselves in you; through Jesus Christ, the Caretaker of the wilds. AMEN.**

**“O God, we hear and hear, and do not understand. We see and see, but do not perceive. Sharpen our memory, unlock our grief, teach us to name what is evil and refuse it: even when it seems normal even when it seems necessary even when it is commanded by religion; then, now, always.” AMEN.**

## **SCRIPTURE APPOINTED for the DAY**

**A reading from the Book of Genesis Chapter 2 beginning at the 15 verse**

*Translation; Complete Jewish Bible*

ADONAI, God, took the person and put him in the garden of 'Eden to cultivate and care for it. ADONAI, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any wild animal which ADONAI, God, had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You are not to eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman answered the serpent, "We may eat from the fruit of the trees of the garden, but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You are neither to eat from it nor touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "It is not true that you will surely die; because God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it had a pleasing appearance and that the tree was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves loincloths.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God**

## Psalm 32

*Translation; Complete Jewish Bible  
By David. A Maskil*

How blessed are those whose offense is forgiven, those whose sin is covered!  
How blessed those to whom ADONAI imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no deceit!

**When I kept silent, my bones wasted away because of my groaning all day long;  
day and night your hand was heavy on me; the sap in me dried up as in a summer  
drought.**

When I acknowledged my sin to you, when I stopped concealing my guilt,  
and said, "I will confess my offenses to ADONAI"; then you, you forgave the guilt of my  
sin.

**This is what everyone faithful should pray at a time when you can be found.  
Then, when the floodwaters are raging, they will not reach to him.**

You are a hiding-place for me, you will keep me from distress; you will surround me  
with songs of deliverance.

**"I will instruct and teach you in this way that you are to go; I will give you  
counsel; my eyes will be watching you."**

Don't be like a horse or mule that has no understanding, that has to be curbed with bit  
and bridle, or else it won't come near you.

**Many are the torments of the wicked, but grace surrounds those who trust  
in ADONAI. Be glad in ADONAI; rejoice, you righteous! Shout for joy, all you upright  
in heart!**

### **A reading from Paul's 5<sup>th</sup> Letter to the Church at Rome (5:12-19)**

Sin came into the world because of what one man did. And with sin came death. So this  
is why all people must die—because all people have sinned. Sin was in the world before  
the Law of Moses. But God does not consider people guilty of sin if there is no law. But  
from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, everyone had to die. Adam died because  
he sinned by not obeying God's command. But even those who did not sin that same  
way had to die.

That one man, Adam, can be compared to Christ, the one who was coming in the  
future. But God's free gift is not like Adam's sin. Many people died because of the sin of  
that one man. But the grace that people received from God was much greater. Many  
received God's gift of life by the grace of this other man, Jesus Christ. After Adam

sinned once, he was judged guilty. But the gift of God is different. His free gift came after many sins, and it makes people right with him. One man sinned, and so death ruled all people because of that one man. But now some people accept God's full grace and his great gift of being made right. Surely they will have true life and rule through the one man, Jesus Christ.

So that one sin of Adam brought the punishment of death to all people. But in the same way, Christ did something so good that it makes all people right with God. And that brings them true life. One man disobeyed God and many became sinners. But in the same way, one man obeyed God and many will be made right.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church  
**Thanks be to God**

### **The Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to Matthew (4:1-11)**

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert. He was taken there to be tempted by the devil. Jesus ate nothing for 40 days and nights. After this, he was very hungry. The devil came to tempt him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these rocks to become bread."

Jesus answered him, "The Scriptures say,  
'It is not just bread that keeps people alive.

Their lives depend on what God says.'"

Then the devil led Jesus to the holy city of Jerusalem and put him on a high place at the edge of the Temple area. He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, jump off, because the Scriptures say,

'God will command the angels to help you,  
and their hands will catch you,  
so that you will not hit your foot on a rock.'"

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test God.'"

Then the devil led Jesus to the top of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and all the wonderful things in them. The devil said, "If you will bow down and worship me, I will give you all these things."

Jesus said to him, "Get away from me, Satan! The Scriptures say,  
'You must worship God and serve only God!'"

So the devil left him. Then some angels came to Jesus and helped him.

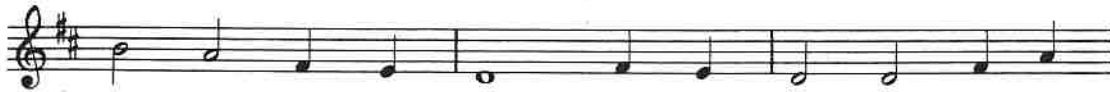
Glory to you, O Christ.  
**Praise to you, O Christ**

# HOMILY

the Reverend Deacon Erik Soldwedel



1 Come, thou fount of ev - ery bless - ing, tune my  
2 Here I find my great - est trea - sure; hith - er,  
3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly



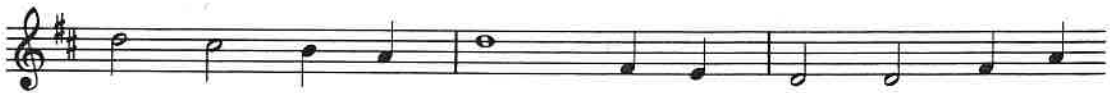
heart to sing thy grace! Streams of mer - cy nev - er  
by thy help, I've come; and I hope, by thy good  
I'm con - strained to be! Let thy good - ness, like a



ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.  
plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.  
fet - ter, bind my wan - dering heart to thee:



Teach me some me - lo - dious son - net, sung by  
Je - sus sought me when a stran - ger wan - dering  
prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to



flam - ing tongues a - bove. Praise the mount! Oh, fix me  
from the fold of God; he, to res - cue me from  
leave the God I love; here's my heart, oh, take and



on it, mount of God's un - chang - ing love.  
dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.  
seal it, seal it for thy courts a - bove.

## Profession of Faith

**We believe in God, who creates all things, who embraces all things, who celebrates all things, who is present in every part of the fabric of creation. We believe in God as the source of all life, who baptizes this planet with living water. We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one, the poor one, the malnourished one, the climate refugee, who loves and cares for this world and who suffers with it. And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life, who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, who moves with God and who moves among and with us today. We believe in everlasting life in God. And we believe in the hope that one day God will put an end to death and all destructive forces.**

## PRAYERS and PETITIONS of the PEOPLE

For those who are experiencing homelessness, unemployment, underemployment or loneliness, that we may lift each other's' burdens.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of mercy,

**Receive our prayer.**

For the health and regeneration of our living planet Earth, that we may accept our responsibility for its care and future.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of creation,

**Receive our prayer.**

We now pray the concerns and thanksgivings of this parish family.

*(You are invited to add additional concerns and thanksgivings.)*

O God of our hearts, God of love, you are with us in every transition and change. We recall your deep compassion, presence and abounding love. We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have blessed us. We thank you for the experiences that have brought us to this moment. We thank you for the work of others that gives breadth and depth to our own work. Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and supporting one another. God of mercy, **God of peace, hear our prayer.**

During this season of Lent, let us hold close to our hearts all those in need, those who suffer, and those who mourn. In the prayers that follow, you are invited to respond with your own concerns and thanksgivings related to the particular focus of each petition.

For those who struggle to see you in their lives and relationships, that we may reflect your Divine love to them.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of tenderness,

**Receive our prayer.**

For all who govern within our towns, states and nations, that they will hear and heed the cry of all in need, and awaken to the call for peace.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of reconciliation,

**Receive our prayer.**

For those for whom the pandemic has caused pain, suffering and hardship, that all around them will respond tenderly.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of compassion,

**Receive our prayer.**

For all who are harmed because of their race or ethnicity, that we may work to dismantle systems of oppression.

*(You are invited to add your specific concerns and thanksgivings in this area.)*

O God of love,

**Receive our prayer.**

We know that you hear our prayers, O God. During this season of Lent, help us to open ourselves to the needs of those around us, that by so doing, we may reveal the beauty of your beloved community. **Amen.**

## **THE PEACE**

The Savior will not command legions of angels nor ride the machine of holy war; the Redeemer will become a slave, take our hate into their heart and win us with forgiveness, for the Savior is God's unexpected peace.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **OFFERTORY**



## **GATHERING at the TABLE**

God be with you!

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to God.**

Let us give thanks to the Creator.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

We thank you, desert Mother, for in the valley of dry bones you create hearts of flesh quickened by the Spirit's breath. We thank you, wise Sister that you walk in cloud and fire with your lost and faithless people.

We thank you, Son of heaven, that you empty yourself of might and glory and set your face toward the fickle crowd, the cruel empire, and the faithful despisers. We welcome you as God's own son whose cross brings to nothing the violence of the world and reveals another wisdom outside the city walls.

Therefore, with all who follow your way with the traders and tax collectors, the soldiers and prostitutes, and all who caught a glimpse of glory in the humanity you shared, we worship God's own holiness revealed in sweat and tears, as we sing:

**Holy, Holy, Holy, my heart, my heart adores you.**

**My heart is glad to say the words, you are the holy one!**

Holy and gracious Creator: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen astray and became vulnerable to evil you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Creator of all.

Before Jesus's mortal death, he taught us and we are bold to pray in whatever language or form that brings us closer to God,

**Our Mother, 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.**

As we gather here today, we are sanctified by Jesus's love and the gift of the Holy Spirit which sustains us this day and always. All this we offer in the unity, constancy and peace; at the last day let us join with all our ancestors and forbearers into the joy of everlasting life.

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us pray together

Creator of this gathering beyond measure and price; we thank you for meeting us in our brokenness so that none might be lost: liberate us now to share our bread with neighbors and strangers, each receiving from the other what we need to be ourselves. AMEN.

## BENEDICTION

### Closing Hymn



1 A might - y for - tress is our God, a bul - wark  
2 Did we in our own strength con - fide, our striv - ing  
3 And though this world, with dev - ils filled, should threat - en  
4 That word a - bove all earth - ly powers, no thanks to



nev - er fail - ing; our help - er he a - mid the flood  
would be los - ing; were not the right man on our side,  
to un - do us; we will not fear, for God hath willed  
them, a - bid - eth; the Spi - rit and the gifts are ours



of mor - tal ills pre - vail - ing: for still our an - cient foe  
the man of God's own choos - ing: dost ask who that may be?  
his truth to tri - umph through us; the prince of dark - ness grim,  
through him who with us sid - eth: let goods and kin - dred go,



doth seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great,  
Christ Je - sus, it is he; Lord Sa - ba - oth his Name,  
we trem - ble not for him; his rage we can en - dure,  
this mor - tal life al - so; the bo - dy they may kill:



and, armed with cru - el hate, on earth is not his e - qual,  
from age to age the same, and he must win the bat - tle.  
for lo! his doom is sure, one lit - tle word shall fell him.  
God's truth a - bid - eth still, his king - dom is for ev - er.

## From Rev. Willie J. Smith

### LENT

Next week we will enter the season of Lent.

Lent comes from the Old English which means "spring season."

If you look closely, you see little hints of spring; early sunrises, later sunsets. A time of transition. A time of beginnings.

For some of us, there are unpleasant reminders of Lent ashes, giving "something up" Good Friday.

Our ancestors in faith experienced Lent as a joyful time.

Historically, Lent is 40 days not counting Sundays.

Sundays during Lent are heralds of the Resurrection.

The focus of the season is to look inwardly at our thoughts and actions. Our Jewish and Muslims kin have a similar time.

This year Ramadan begins on the evening of Tuesday February 17<sup>th</sup>, the day before our Ash Wednesday.

Fasting, almsgiving and prayer are the lens we are encouraged to use during Lent.

Again, for many of us the idea of fasting, almsgiving and prayer invoke unpleasant memories.

Perhaps it is important that we revisit what does it mean to fast, give alms and pray.

The Gospel on Ash Wednesday we are encouraged not to make a show of we do or not do (if we choose to) during Lent.

Fasting is refrain from something; for most of us food, tobacco or alcohol; but there are other things to fast from media, gossip or curse words are a few examples.

Almsgiving to assist someone who is in need. You could do it financially or creatively for example: holding the door for someone, saying "Good Morning" or "Thank you".

Prayer to turn to God a little more purposively other than Sunday; like pausing at 12 noon to pray for Peace or something /person that comes to your attention.

Lent can be a joyful time, a creative time. You decide what Lent will be for you.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, after Jesus is baptized we read the Spirit sent Jesus to the desert or Jesus was driven to the desert (depending on the Gospel). In the desert Jesus discerned his Baptism.

Lent is a time of joyful discernment. It is not about getting the ashes. I will leave you with a question: What is the Spirit you approach Lent? Are you sent or are you driven?

## **SOMETHING TO PONDER**

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I encourage each of you, in this season of Lent, to dream and imagine the Church of Redeemer in the 21st Century. I continue to challenge you to look at who you are as a leader in the Episcopal church, offering not just inclusive language but a congregation that acts on their faith.

Taking this time to dream and explore encourages breaking out of stagnant routines and imagining a better & brighter future. The church of the Redeemer is filled with people who believe in faith inspired by the hope that life is eternal, supported by the sustaining promise of God's unquestionable love.

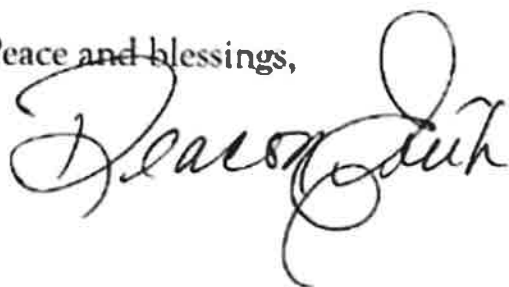
Complacency leads to defeat and exclusion. This is not what I have been told is the spirit of the Church of the Redeemer. Actively exploring new initiatives and ministries is the gift of our imaginations. Now more than ever, it is time for us to dream.

I challenged you all in Advent to do some cleaning and clearing of spaces. The specific space was and is the church undercroft, which is cluttered and presents neglect. I have been told there are treasures in this space, and it is time to rescue these treasures. The opportunity to name and identify these artifacts of Redeemer's history will unearth many of the seeds of your dreams for the Church of the Redeemer.

These are gifts that require moving from dreams to planning and action that will chart the course of faith in action, our ministry in 2026, and thereafter. Let us welcome Eastertide with the joy of resurrection.

In last week's Gospel, we learned that Jesus was talking with Elijah and Moses as witnessed by Peter, James, and John. We also learned that Peter wanted to preserve this with individual huts for Jesus and the two prophets. Instead, God exclaimed this is my son whom I am pleased, listen to him. In the moment of this dramatic transfiguration, belief is realized.

Peace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Deacon John". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text "Peace and blessings,".