



# *The Season of Sacred Story*





## SEASON OF SACRED STORY IV

### PRELUDE

*(Stand as you are able)*

#### **OPENING HYMN** God Is Truly with Us (NCH 68)

1 God is truly with us;  
sing we and adore now;  
praise the One we come before now.  
Here within this temple,  
here in sound and silence,  
worship God in deepest reverence.  
You alone, God, we own,  
you, our God and Savior;  
praise to you forever.

2 God is truly with us;  
loud our praise resounding!  
Echoes of the saints surrounding!  
"Holy, holy, holy,"  
hear the hymn ascending,  
angels, saints, their voices blending!  
Bow your ear to us here;  
hear, O Christ, the praises  
that your Church now raises.

3 Source of every blessing,  
bless the ones who name you,  
let our words and deeds proclaim you.  
Like the saints and angels  
praising you in glory,  
may your servants sing your story.  
And in all, great and small,  
may we do most nearly  
what you love most dearly

#### **THE SEASON OF SACRED STORY GREETING**

O God of every now and every then,  
**We pause to praise you for all the moments of our lives.**

We praise you for the holy moments, remembered in story, that strengthen our faith.  
**We each have a story and our story has power.**

We praise you for the aching moments, remembered in story, from which we learn.  
**We each have a story and our story has power.**

We praise you for the extraordinary moments, remembered in story, that call us to our better selves.

**We each have a story and our story has power.**

We praise you for every moment

**and the beauty of stories that draw us closer to you.**

### **HYMN OF PRAISE** (*Celebrant and the People in Unison*)

**Praise to the living God who has given life from a shrouded world.**

**Thanksgiving for the risen Christ who has drawn the sting of death,  
bringing all to life in him.**

**Praise to the flowing Spirit that sets us and all creation free and seals our hearts with faith.  
Glory to God the Creator, glory to Jesus the redeemer, and glory to the Holy Spirit our  
sustainer now and forever. Amen**

Let us pray together

**Divine sower, scattering seed, never hoarding, wasting life – so the world thinks: give us  
the depth to receive the gift so freely given and the maturity to revel in love's abundant,  
reckless growth; through Jesus Christ the grain of life. AMEN**

### **THE SACRED STORY**

#### **UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Preamble and Article 25

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,  
Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,  
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.  
Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

### **PSALM 128**

**A Song of Ascents.**

**Happy is everyone in awe of ADONAI,**

**who walks in the creator's ways,  
for you will eat the labor of your hands.**

**You will be blessed  
and it will be good for you.**

**Your family wife will be like a fruitful vineyard.**

**Your children will be like olive saplings around your table.**

**Behold, thus all will be blessed  
who fears ADONAI.**

**May ADONAI bless you out of Zion,  
and may you see Jerusalem in prosperity**

all the days of your life,  
and may you live to see your children's children.  
**Shalom** be upon Israel!

The people respond **Thanks be to God.**

## **A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW** 13:31-33; 44-52

*Tree of Life Version*

Jesus presented to them another parable, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. It's the smallest of all seeds; yet when it's full grown, it's greater than the other herbs. It becomes like a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Jesus told them another parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like *hametz*, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a person found and hid. And because of their joy, they go out and sell all that they have to buy that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. Upon finding a pearl of great value, she went out and sold all that she had and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea, gathering things of every kind. When it was filled, they pulled it ashore; and they sat down and gathered up the good into containers, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all these things?"

They said to Jesus, "Yes."

Then Jesus said to them, "Therefore every *Torah* scholar disciplined for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure both new things and old."

Response before the Gospel **Glory to you, O Christ.**

Response following the Gospel **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **REFLECTION**

*(Celebrant bids the Creed, Stand as you are able)*

**PROFESSION OF FAITH** *(Read in unison; Stand as you are able)*

**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. Amen.**

**THE PRAYERS AND PETITIONS OF THE PEOPLE** *(Stand/kneel or sit as you are able)*

*(The Leader and People pray responsively)*

God of love, you are with us in every transition and change. 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.**

Grant us the courage to hear your call to engage in the personal and communal work of dismantling racism through deep listening, reflection, and action as a call to justice for all God's people.

**Suffering God, disturb us.**

We pray for relief from the ongoing scourge of gun violence. We pray for those who have died and those who have been wounded. We pray for our legislators, that they would look beyond their self-interests.

**Sophia God, compel us to change.**

We pray for all children, parents, faculty and staff as they seek to create a safe learning environment. May their hearts, bodies and minds be nourished as they record their own stories within this living history.

**Creator God, guide us.**

We pray for all those pushed to the margins facing food shortages, housing uncertainties, or lack of access to health care or mental health care. We pray for all who live in fear.

**Tender God, hold us.**

We now offer the specific concerns of this parish family...

*(The leaders will leave a period of time for the people to name their concerns silently, aloud or in the chat.)*

Help us create new stories that reflect the full inclusion of every human being. Loving God, show us how to fully honor the rainbow of all humankind.

We now offer the thanksgivings of this parish family...

*(The leaders will leave a period of time for the people to name their thanksgivings silently, aloud or in the chat.)*

O God, you have created the wondrous diversity of our lives: hear our prayers and help us to walk humbly with you. May our story grow as one of justice, strength and dignity for all creation.

**Thank you God, for hearing our prayers this day and always. AMEN.**

We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins.

*(Silence may be kept.)*

*(Leader and People)*

You prepare a place for us;

We refuse your invitation.

Creator have mercy.

**Creator have mercy.**

Your table is open to all;

We keep it for ourselves.

Redeemer have mercy

**Redeemer have mercy.**

Your welcome is wild;

We are caged by fear.

Sustainer have mercy.

**Sustainer have mercy.**

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through Savior Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

## THE PEACE

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### OFFERTORY HYMN I'm Pressing on The Upward Way (NCH 442)

1 I'm pressing on the upward way,  
new heights I'm gaining every day;  
Still praying as I'm onward bound,  
"O plant me, God, on higher ground."

Refrain:

O lift me up, and I shall be  
by faith in heaven eternally,  
A higher plane than I have found,  
O plant me, God, on higher ground.

2 My heart has no desire to stay  
where doubts arise and fears dismay;  
Though some may dwell where these abound,  
my prayer, my aim is higher ground. [Refrain]

4 I want to scale the utmost height,  
and catch a gleam of glory bright;  
But still I'll pray till heaven I've found,  
"God, lead me on the higher ground." [Refrain]

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

God is with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to God.**

Let us give thanks to the Creator our God.

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

(Celebrant)

Eternal God, in the abundance of your love you have caused all things to be; from dust and spirit you have woven our humanity; in all our wanderings you never cease to call us to fullness of life.

You gave us Jesus, son of Mary, the bread of life broken for the world; he fed us and feasted with us, he healed us and suffered for us; his dying and rising have set us free from the poverty of sin and the famine of death.

Therefore, with all whom you have made, cherished and called, with all who hunger for your kingdom and will not rest until all your children are fed, with the broken saints and redeemed sinners of all the ages, we take up the song of your praise:

(Sung twice first time in Spanish then in English)

San - to, san - to, san - to, mi cor - a - zon te a - do - ra! Mi  
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, my heart, my heart a - dores you! My

cor - a - zon te sa - be de - cir: san - to e - res Se - ñor.  
heart is glad to say the words: you are ho - ly, Lord.

Inspire us with hope that one day death and greed will be no more and people without number will come from east and west, north and south to share the kingdom meal.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our savior, by whom and with whom and in whom in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory be yours, Mother of blessings, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

As Jesus taught we now pray in the language and version that brings us closest to the Creator.

(Celebrant)

Entrust your life to the Creator of the open spaces and the time of adventure; to the life that pulses through rain drenched streets and mountain heights; to the love that sustains us through feast and famine. Let God's hope be a clearing sky before you, a compass in your heart guiding you to where you belong. **Amen**

Let us pray.

**May we who have gathered at Wisdom's table take her welcome out to where tables are reserved and doors are closed; may the Spirit drive us to break our bread on the altar of the world. Amen.**

## **BENEDICTION/BLESSING**

### **CLOSING HYMN** Father Almighty (NCH 518)

1 Father almighty, bless us with your blessing:  
answer in love your children's supplication;  
Hear now our prayer, the spoken and unspoken;  
hear us, Eternal God.

2 Christ of compassion, carry all who seek you  
to pastures green beside the peaceful waters;  
Most tender guide, in ways of cheerful duty  
lead us, good Shepherd.

3 Mother of mercy, from your watch and keeping  
no space can part, nor hour of time remove us;  
Give us your good, and save us from our evil,  
Infinite Spirit.



## DISMISSAL

## POSTLUDE

**FROM DEACON ERIK SOLDWEDEL - JULY 19 & 26<sup>TH</sup> 2026**

Following what I wrote last week about change, I offer you this brief quote from Frederick Buechner originally published in his book *The Sacred Journey*:

"...GOD SPEAKS TO us through our lives, we often too easily say. Something speaks anyway, spells out some sort of godly or godforsaken meaning to us through the alphabet of our years, but often it takes many years and many further spellings out before we start to glimpse, or think we do, a little of what that meaning is. Even then we glimpse it only dimly, like the first trace of dawn on the rim of night, and even then it is a meaning that we cannot fix and be sure of once and for all because it is always incarnate meaning and thus as alive and changing as we are ourselves alive and changing."

Frederick Buechner (July 11, 1926 – August 15, 2022) authored thirty-nine books and was a Presbyterian minister, noted preacher and theologian. His career spanned six decades, and you will find that I refer to him quite often as he is one of my favorite contemporary theologians. Buechner is one of my favorite "go to" theologians. I not only find clarity in his words but also inspiration, and because of that, I reference and quote him on a regular basis. In last week's message, I urged you all to take the summer to reflect on the sacred stories shared each week. I wrote about my grandparents' storytelling from the "Old Country", and my day dreaming as I look to the sky as I lie on the beach or the warm summer grass. I suggest that you too may recall the changes in your own life. May your recollections bring dreams for the future for you, your families, and your spiritual home, The Church of the Redeemer, Morristown. Let your mind dream big: the change you wish for this parish church as you embrace the foundations of our church expressed in faith, hope, and love.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

\* **The Serendipity Stitchers** welcome you. 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> **Tuesdays** at **1:30 p.m.** Our gatherings are always full of laughter, delicious treats, and plenty of good company. No experience necessary. Please get in touch with Veronica for more information.

\* **The Book Group meets online at 7pm:**

**7/27 THE HEART GOES LAST** - Margaret Atwood *The Heart Goes Last* is a vivid, urgent vision of development and decay, freedom and surveillance, struggle and hope—and the timeless workings of the human heart.

**8/31 There are Rivers in the Sky** - Elif Shafak

Please support your local bookshop and Redeemer by ordering from our online Bookshop. <https://bookshop.org/shop/Redeemer>

\***Earth Ministry & Environmental Sustainability** We love our Jersey Beaches! Be beach aware! Did you know the NJ EPA has a beach monitoring program with aerial observations and water testing, aiming to keep the public safe and watch the health of our beaches and water quality? See <https://njbeaches.org/> And for you who love to fish, catch, and eat seafood and shellfish, inform yourself with the monitoring of local seafood on <https://tinyurl.com/5d35696y>

You can see freshwater monitored (harmful algal blooms) on <https://tinyurl.com/5takxvvn>

Consider this action to care for creation and give back on our beaches on 10/24/2026 when there are many Beach Sweeps.

We know you pack out all your trash (and maybe a little extra) from your beach trips! Please contact Peg with questions.

**Garden of Hope:** We are thankful that we have gifts in the opportunity to participate in the beauty and cycle of creation in our church backyard and offer fresh veggies to our siblings who are food insecure. Our next **POP-UP GARDEN WORK SESSION** is on **Saturday, 7/25**, from **8-11AM**. Please join us in this ministry! Thank you for your compost offerings! Please continue. We have a much better place in the cycle of creation for them than the landfill!

Peg can be reached at [pegonplanetearth\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:pegonplanetearth(at)gmail.com) or see her on Sundays.

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