

Service of Holy Communion

4th Sunday of Lent

March 15th, 2026



INTRODUCTION

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. “I was blind, now I see,” declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God’s beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The congregation stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P. Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

P. Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

The congregation sits or kneels. Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdaining the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of ✠ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace. **Amen.**

Congregation stands

GATHERING HYMN

There Is a Balm in Gilead

ELW 614

GREETING

P. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C. And also with you.**

KYRIE

A. Hold us in your mercy.

C. Hold us in your mercy.

A. Open our hearts.

C. Open our hearts.

A. Hold us in your love.

C. Hold us in your love. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. Bend your ear to our prayers, O Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring love into our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Congregation is seated

WORD

FIRST READING: Samuel 16:1-13

¹The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ²Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'" ³Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." ⁴Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." ⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ⁹Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." ¹¹Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹²He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." ¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

A. Word of God, word of life.

C. Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 23 (*read responsively*)

¹The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.

²**The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.**

³You restore my soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no**

evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

⁶ **Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

A. Word of God, word of life.

C. **Thanks be to God.**

TIME FOR THE CHILD IN US ALL

Children & Youth are invited forward for a special sermon time with Pastor Peggy.

Congregation stands

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

GOSPEL: John 9:1-41

P. The holy gospel according to John. C. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹ As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the

man's eyes, ⁷ saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰ The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴ They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

P. The gospel of the Lord. **C. Praise to you, O Christ.**

Congregation is seated

SERMON

Clear as Mud

PRAYER STATIONS

There are 5 prayer stations throughout the sanctuary that you can move to during this time. The 6th option is to stay seated while meditating, praying, and listening to the background music. The prayer stations are the same each week, with the exception of the poem changing weekly. The intention is that you take in 1 or 2 stations each week, visiting each station at least once by the end of Lent. We will spend about 5 minutes at the prayer stations before entering into the Hymn of the Day.

Congregation stands

HYMN OF THE DAY

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

ELW 779

APOSTLE'S CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

A. Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs. *A brief silence.*

A. God, our shepherd, we pray that you guide the church. Lead Christians in our community and across the globe in right paths for your name's sake. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. God our provider, we cry out for this planet and the life it holds. Rescue endangered animals and plants, preserve threatened ecosystems, and save creatures from natural disasters. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. God our sovereign, we plead for your peace on earth. Bring an end to war and violence, and raise up leaders in governments, courts, businesses, schools, and community organizations who seek goodness and mercy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. God our healer, we call to you in our need. Uplift all who are made to feel unimportant, and transform the hearts of all infected by bigotry and prejudice. Care for all in special need this day, especially...those we now say aloud...and those we hold in our hearts... Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. God our friend, we praise you for the diversity of people among us. Awaken us to share and receive the gifts we each possess, and stir up a spirit of understanding, celebration, and welcome for all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

A. God our home, we thank you for all who have died and completed their baptismal journeys. Grant us faith to live until we too dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

P. Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation. **Amen.**

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P. The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C. And also with you.

P. Let us share with each other a sign of Christ's peace.

Congregation is seated

MEAL

OFFERTORY INVITATION

Scan to give
via Venmo



Offering can be given by putting it in the offering plate when it is passed, online directly via the QR codes for Tithely or Venmo, or by requesting your bank to send a check to the church. Find more details on our website.

Scan to give
via Tithely



Thank you for your generous gifts!

Congregation stands

OFFERTORY SONG

Just as I am; thy love un-known has bro - ken ev - 'ry
bar - rier down; now to be thine, yea, thine a - lone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

A. Let us pray... O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts of bread and wine, draw us into the death and life of your Son, who calls us to bear witness to his saving work. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

DIALOGUE & PREFACE OF THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

P. The Lord be with you.

C. And also with you.

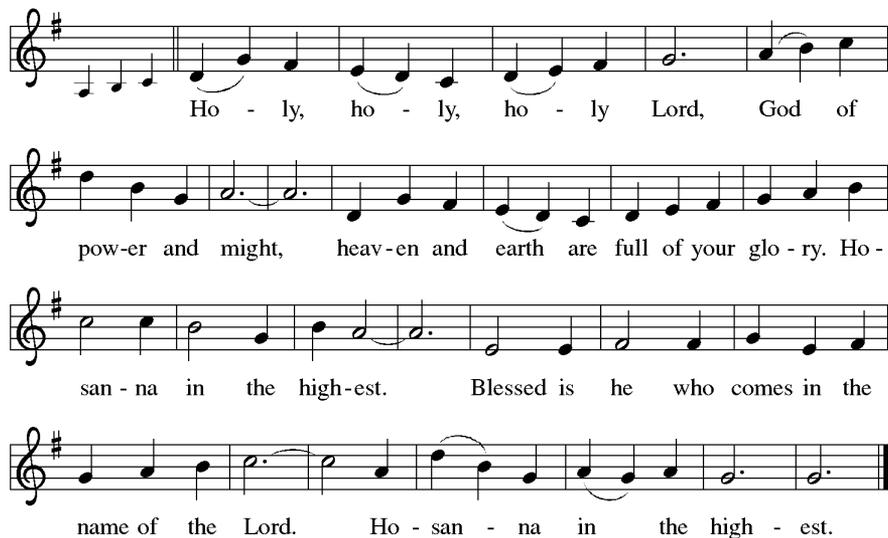
P. Lift up your hearts.

C. We lift them to the Lord.

P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P. It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
pow - er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Blessed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The congregation sits or kneels.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P. Holy God, our living Water and our merciful Guide, together with rivers and seas, wells and springs, we bless and magnify you. You led your people Israel through the desert, and provided them water from the rock.

We praise you for Christ, our Rock and our Water, who joins us in our desert, pouring out his life for the world.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await your salvation for all this thirsty world.

Pour out your Spirit on this holy food and on all gathered for this feast: wash away our sin, that we may be renewed for our journey by the love of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty God, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. **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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Believing in the real presence of Christ, we practice Eucharistic hospitality. All baptized persons are welcome to Communion this morning. Children may come forward for a blessing.

Please come forward, guided by the Ushers, to receive the bread and wine. Gluten free wafers are available, please note this to Pastor Peggy when you come forward. Grape juice is available in the second communion plate. As you return to your seat via the side aisles you can place your empty cup in the baskets on either side.

P. Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

COMMUNION SONG

sing 2X through

Take, oh, take me as I am; sum-mon out what I shall be;

set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

After all have received Communion the congregation stands.

TABLE BLESSING

P. The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

SONG AFTER COMMUNION

“Go, my chil - dren, with my bless-ing, nev - er a - lone.

Wak - ing, sleep - ing, I am with you, you are my own.

In my love’s bap-tis - mal riv - er I have made you mine for-ev - er.

Go, my chil - dren, with my bless - ing, you are my own.”

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A. Let us pray... God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthen us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BENEDICTION

P. Receive the blessings of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit whose breath sustains creation, ✠ bless you now and always. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

ELW 793

DISMISSAL

A. Go in peace. Believe the good news. **C. Thanks be to God**

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS020048. Permission to reprint/stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE #A-731656. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Announcements for March 15th, 2026

Welcome to Holy Counselor Lutheran Church. May you experience the joy of God's presence in our worship!

If today is your **first time** worshipping at Holy Counselor, please be sure to fill out the "Guest Book" on the table in the narthex and **take a welcome bag**. Please ask our ushers any questions you may have regarding worship this morning. **Large print bulletins are available.**

The **Pray-ground** is a special place to help **support kids and families** in worshipping. We love the sound of kids in worship! God made kids wiggly and curious, and we celebrate that here. **Tips:** explain, participate, and move around together. Need to leave? No problem, but please come back!

Worship is live streamed to our church Facebook page, but the camera is pointed away during Communion and is not on the children when they come forward during A Time for the Child in Us All. **Anyone on the altar is on camera.**

~~~~~

**Volunteers for Today's Worship**

|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Lay Asst.</b>    | Debbie Lennon           |
| <b>Ushers</b>       | <i>Volunteer needed</i> |
| <b>Comm. Asst.</b>  | <i>Volunteer needed</i> |
| <b>Tech</b>         | <i>Volunteer needed</i> |
| <b>Tellers</b>      | <i>Volunteer needed</i> |
| <b>Refreshments</b> | <i>Volunteer needed</i> |

**\*\*\*\*\* Join us for refreshments after worship\*\*\*\*\***

**HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**

**Palm Sunday** Worship, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 9:30am  
**Easter Egg Hunt**, Palm Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am  
**Maundy Thursday** Worship, Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7pm  
**Good Friday** Tenebrae Worship, Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7pm  
**Easter** Worship, Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 9:30am

**THIS WEEK AT HOLY COUNSELOR**

**Sunday, March 15:** Sunday School, 8:45-9:15am  
Worship w/Communion, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, 9:30am  
Corned Beef & Cabbage to Go meal pickup  
Choir Practice following worship

**Tuesday, March 17:** Pastor's Comm. Office Hours, Café Dolci,  
Warwick, 12-2pm

**Wednesday, March 18:** Adult Ed Lenten Bible Study, Zoom, 10am & 7pm

**Friday, March 20:** Loaves & Fishes Game Night, 5-6:30pm

**Saturday, March 21:** Sisters in Prayer, Zoom, 8:30am

**Sunday, March 22:** Sunday School, 8:45-9:15am  
Worship w/Communion, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, 9:30am  
Choir Practice following worship

**Easter Flowers:** You can order **beautiful Easter Lilies, Daffodils, Tulips, or Hyacinths** to adorn the sanctuary on Easter morning and then take them home to enjoy! **Easter flower orders are due to the office TODAY Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>.** Please use the half sheet flyer to order and note your payment option.

**Pastor's Community Office Hours-March:** Pastor Peggy will be at **Café Dolci in Warwick THIS Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, and NEXT Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> from 12-2pm** for Community Office Hours. All are welcome to visit as she is present in the community.

**Loaves & Fishes:** Loaves and Fishes (our young adults and young families group) will gather for **game night** at church **THIS Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 5-6:30pm**. Dinner will be provided! **Let Pastor Peggy know if you plan to come** so we have enough food. Come join the fun and **bring your favorite game** to share!

**Easter Egg Hunt & Donations:** We are excited for our annual Easter Egg Hunt on Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am! We are looking for **donations of individually wrapped candy and non-candy prizes. Please bring all donations to church NEXT Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>** and put them under the narrow table in the Narthex. Speak to Diane Rossi with questions.

**Easter Prayer Vigil Sign-up:** You are invited to keep vigil in the Sanctuary beginning Saturday evening on April 4<sup>th</sup> into Easter morning on Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup>. Hour slots are available; sign-up on the chart next to Sign-up Central. **You can participate individually, as a pair, or a group.** Refreshments and reading materials will be provided.

**Vacation Bible School—Coordinator Needed:** We are looking for a leader to be the VBS Coordinator this summer. Pastor Peggy will help with planning, organizing, and running VBS, but we need a point person. **If you are available during the daytime in the summer and love having fun with kids this is for you!** Please contact Pastor Peggy ASAP as planning needs to begin.

**Food Pantry:** **Food items to help restock:** boxed cereal, boxed oatmeal pouches, scanned stew, canned chili, canned corn, children's juice boxes or pouches, 4-pack toilet paper, liquid dish soap, & toothpaste. You can always bring donations of canned goods, paper goods, and hygiene products. All donations can be **placed in the blue bin** by the sanctuary doors. Thank you!





**Holy Counselor**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Church Office (973) 827-5251  
www.hc-lutheranchurch.org

The Reverend Peggy Ludlow: [pastorpeggy@hc-lutheranchurch.org](mailto:pastorpeggy@hc-lutheranchurch.org)  
Director of Music: June Tarantino: [music@hc-lutheranchurch.org](mailto:music@hc-lutheranchurch.org)  
Office Administrator: Cathy Nemecek: [office@hc-lutheranchurch.org](mailto:office@hc-lutheranchurch.org)  
Bookkeeper: Wynn White: [accounts@hc-lutheranchurch.org](mailto:accounts@hc-lutheranchurch.org)

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*As Children of God,  
we are called to share and serve  
Christ's love and bring God's word to all.*

### **CHURCH COUNCIL**

**Pastor** Rev. Peggy Ludlow  
**President** Nancy Knecht  
**Vice President** Frank Urbaniak  
**Treasurer** Claire Speroni  
**Recording Secretary** Dawn McCormick  
**Financial Secretary** John Heeren  
**Outreach Coordinator** Francine Vince  
**Nurture Coordinator** Fred Schoenagel  
**Administration Coordinator** Diane Rossi

### **PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Kristina Heeren  
Pam Kucks  
Matt Moller  
Aileen Donovan

*Holy Counselor is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Munsee people, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.*

