

BERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
820 West Leesport Road, Leesport, PA 19533

He makes me
lie down in
green pastures;
he leads me beside
still waters ...

Psalm 23:2, NRSV



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Sunday, April 21, 2024 — 10:00 a.m.

INTRODUCTION

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

PRESERVICE MUSIC

PRELUDE "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" -arr. by
Albin C. Whitworth

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(*) Please stand as you are able.

LBW (green hymnal) WOV (blue hymnal)

GATHERING

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

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

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

P: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Most merciful God,

C: **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

* **GATHERING HYMN**

“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”

LBW #456

* **APOSTOLIC 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.**

I AM
the
GOOD
Shepherd

JOHN 10:11

* KYRIE

A In peace, let us pray to the Lord. B Lord, have mer - cy.

A For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

B Lord, have mer - cy.

A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

B Lord, have mer - cy.

A For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord. B Lord, have mer - cy.

A Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra-cious Lord. B A - men

* HYMN OF PRAISE



A Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



B Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther:



We wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God:



You take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.



You are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther; re - ceive our prayer.



For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it,



in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men

*** PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray together.

C: **O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 4:5-12

Peter and John had been arrested the previous day because they were proclaiming the news of the resurrection to the people. In today's reading, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit so that he can proclaim salvation in Jesus' name to the religious authorities.

⁵The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' ¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

P: Word of God. Word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 23:1-6 (*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.**

⁵You 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: 1 John 3:16-24

*Jesus' death on our behalf is the clearest demonstration of
divine love. This is the very love we share with others, not just
through our words but especially through our deeds. In sharing
such love we fulfill God's commandments.*

¹⁶We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for
us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How
does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and
sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in
truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from
the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our
hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he
knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,
we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him
whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do
what pleases him.

²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the
name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has

commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

P: Word of God. Word of life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*** GOSPEL READING: John 10:11-18**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.

Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

In language that recalls the twenty-third psalm, Jesus describes himself as the shepherd who cares for his sheep. He is willing to die for them, and he is able to overcome death for them.

[Jesus said:] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in

order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.



SERMON – Pastor Kenneth Gould

Silence for Meditation

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Have No Fear, Little Flock”

LBW #476
vs. 1, 2, and 3

*** APOSTLES’ CREED**

P: God has made us his people through Baptism into Christ.
Living together in trust and hope, let us confess our faith:

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again 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 INTERCESSION

P: Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

A brief silence.

P: Shepherding God, gather your church whenever we wander from you and one another. Empower our church in ministries around the world to worship and serve alongside global companions as equal partners and coworkers in the gospel. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Nurturing God, preserve the health of biomes and ecosystems. Inspire scientists, researchers, conservation organizations, and all people entrusted with the task of caring for creation, that we may be better stewards of the world around us. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Almighty God, lead nations and communities to share resources, cooperate in solving conflicts, and listen to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Help all those with power to share it and to use such power for good. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Loving God, protect the very young and the very old, those living without housing, victims of domestic abuse, and all who live with chronic illness or compromised immune systems. We pray especially for Lucy, JoAnn, Jane, Robert, Donna, Pauline, Lisa, Myra, Ruth, and all those we name in our hearts or aloud... Guide communities to actively care for people who are vulnerable. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Gracious God, help this and all communities of faith to listen for your voice. Call us away from things that distract us from following you. Invite us to more deeply love and serve people who are lonely, isolated, and on the margins. God of grace,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Giving God, you bless us with the gift of supply pastors who shepherd our congregation each Sunday. Give us patience, wisdom, and guidance as we go through this time of change, and we pray that you will lead us in the right direction as we discern your vision for our future. God of grace,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Living God, we give thanks for our ancestors in faith. Strengthen us to share the good news in our own day. God of grace,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

C: **Amen.**

* **SHARING OF THE PEACE**

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us share a sign of that peace with one another.

OFFERING

*** OFFERING HYMN**

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”

The image shows a musical score for a hymn in 4/4 time, key of D major. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here be - low; Praise Him a - bove, ye heav'n-ly host; Praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost." The music features a simple, hymn-like melody with a steady piano accompaniment.

*** OFFERING PRAYER**

P: Let us pray together.

C: **Risen One, you call us to believe and bear fruit. May the gifts that we offer here be signs of your abiding love. Form us to be your witnesses in the world, through Jesus Christ, our true vine. Amen.**

MEAL

*** 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 him thanks and praise.**

*** THE PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right and salutary...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

* THE SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:



Heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who



comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

* THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

LBW, page 70

* THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as our Lord Jesus taught us:

C: **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

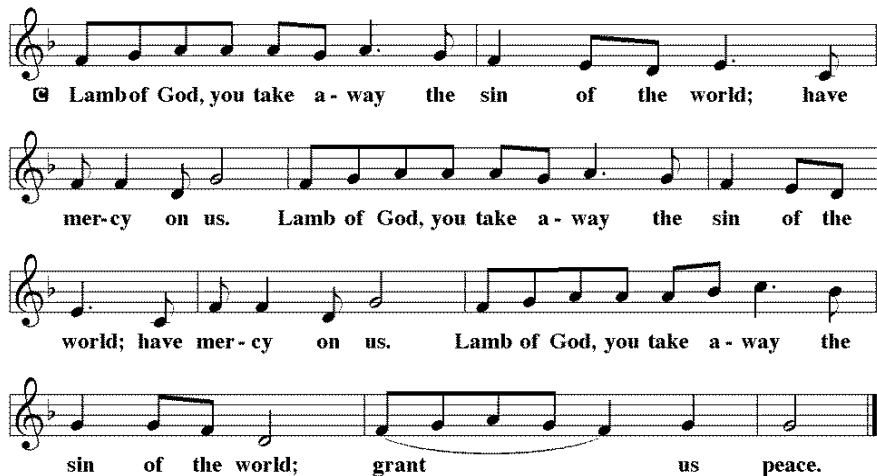
**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: The risen Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread. Come and eat at God's table.

* THE AGNUS DEI



☞ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

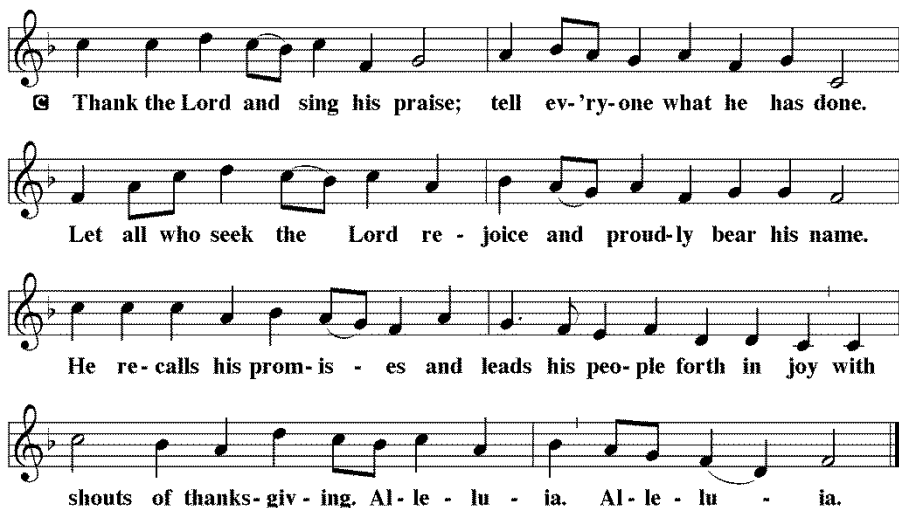
DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

* POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

C: Amen.

* POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



☞ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.
Let all who seek the Lord re - joice and proud-ly bear his name.
He re - calls his prom - is - es and leads his peo - ple forth in joy with
shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*** POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

P: Let us pray. Shepherding God, you have prepared a table before us and nourished us with your love. Send us forth from this banquet to proclaim your goodness and share the abundant mercy of Jesus, our redeemer and friend.

C: **Amen.**

SENDING

*** BLESSING**

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C: **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

P: The God of resurrection power, the Christ of unending joy, and the Spirit of Easter hope ☩ bless you now and always.

C: **Amen.**

*** SENDING HYMN**

“God Be with You Till We Meet Again”



1 God be with you till we meet a - gain; by good coun-sels guide, up - hold you,
2 God be with you till we meet a - gain; ho - ly wings se - cure - ly hide you,
3 God be with you till we meet a - gain; when life's per - ils thick con-found you,



with a shep-herd's care en - fold you;
dai - ly man - na still pro - vide you; God be with you till we meet a - gain.
put un-fail - ing arms a - round you;

Refrain



Till we meet, till we meet, till we meet at Je - sus' feet;



till we meet, till we meet, God be with you till we meet a - gain.

*** DISMISSAL**

P: Alleluia! Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

C: **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

*** POSTLUDE**

“Holy Ground”

-Christopher Beatty

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WELCOME to all who have gathered here for worship this morning! If you are a newcomer to Bern, please sign the guest book in the narthex or fill out the yellow card in the pew rack and place it in the offering plate. We rejoice in the opportunity to worship our Lord together!

WE WELCOME TO THE LORD’S TABLE all the baptized. We believe that Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, is present in the bread and wine as God’s gracious gift to us. For those who prefer it, grape juice is available in the pre-filled glasses in the trays at the front of the center aisle. Contactless elements are available from the Greeter when you receive your bulletin or in the tray at the front of the aisle. Please notify an usher if there is a need for the pastor to bring communion to the pew. Children who do not yet commune are invited to come forward to receive a blessing.

OFFICE HOURS:

Church Phone: 610-374-4343

Church Email: bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com

Secretary Korinne: Tuesday – 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday – 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday – 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

THANK YOU to Pastor Kenneth Gould for leading us in worship this morning and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR APRIL 14, 2024

Attendance: 45

Income towards Expenses: \$1,252.00

Benevolence: \$ 105.00

TOTAL: \$1,357.00

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS AND SPONSORS:

OPENER: Jane Battaglieri

GREETER: Barbara Auchenbach

ACOLYTE: Hannah Lash

LECTOR: Brenda Reichart

COMMUNION ASSISTANT: Linda Lash

ALTAR FLOWERS: Given to the Glory of God in memory of Paul Moyer by Beverly Moyer.

BULLETINS: Given to the Glory of God in honor of Anne Spieker's birthday tomorrow by David and Beth Hartman.

CELEBRATIONS THIS WEEK:

BIRTHDAYS: 21–Cheryl Knabb, 22–Carol Eichner,
22–Anne Spieker, 24–Jack Kochan,
25–Jeffrey Reichart

ANNIVERSARIES: 25–Kenneth and Donna Marks (26 years)

WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR THIS WEEK:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Sunday, April 21 | ▪ Confirmation Class, 9:00 a.m. |
| | ▪ Worship, 10:00 a.m. |
| | -Fourth Sunday of Easter |
| | -Pastor Kenneth Gould |
| | ▪ Sunday School, 11:00 a.m. |
| Tuesday, April 23 | ▪ Berks Festival of Faith, 4:00-7:00 p.m. |
| Friday, April 26 | ▪ Frog Pond (AA Group), 6:00 p.m. |
| Sunday, April 28 | ▪ Confirmation Class, 9:00 a.m. |
| | ▪ Worship, 10:00 a.m. |
| | -Fifth Sunday of Easter |
| | -Deacon Travis Woodfield |
| | ▪ Sunday School, 11:00 a.m. |

DEACON TRAVIS WOODFIELD will be our guest pastor for our worship service next Sunday, April 28th. Deacon Woodfield is the Director of Congregation Legacy and Purpose for the Northeastern PA Synod. In this role, he is responsible for research and development leading to a strategic plan for congregations to live well and serve well. Some of you might remember Deacon Woodfield as a guest at our 25th Anniversary Celebration in November. Join us for worship as we welcome Deacon Woodfield to Bern Lutheran Church.

GERANIUM FLOWER ORDERS – We will be decorating the sanctuary with red geraniums for Pentecost Sunday, May 19th. The price is \$6.00 for a 6” double-bloom pot. An order form is included in your bulletin. Orders are due to the church office by Sunday, May 12th. Thank you!

KAUFFMAN’S BBQ CHICKEN DINNER, SYCAMORE FARMS APPLE DUMPLING AND FLOWER SALE – We will be holding our annual BBQ chicken dinner, apple dumpling and flower sale this year on **Thursday, May 23rd**. There will be an assortment of hanging baskets, planters, and log boxes to choose from. Pick up of the dinners and dumplings will be between 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Prices for the chicken dinners will be \$11.00 and apple dumplings will be \$6.00. You can place your orders by calling the church office at 610-374-4343, emailing the church at bernlutheranchurch@gmail.com, or ordering on our church website at www.berchurch.org.

NEWSLETTER MAILING – If you are currently receiving the monthly newsletter by mail and would like to receive it by email, or if you are receiving it by mail and email, and no longer need a paper copy, please let Korinne know in the office.

SIGN-UP SHEETS – We are in need of Bulletin sponsors for Sunday, May 12, and Sunday, May 26. Thank you to everyone who signed up.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION – When a member experiences a medical emergency while at the church, they are not always in a position to share the information that is asked by the 911 staff and emergency responders. The Health Ministries Committee has developed an Emergency Information Sheet to assist with this communication. They are available on the table in the narthex and once completed, should be placed in the envelope that is with the form. The envelope is then sealed and placed in the Health Ministries mailbox. Your name and the date that the form was completed should be written on the front of the envelope. These will be filed in the locked Health Ministries file cabinet and your envelope will only be opened and your form accessed in the case of an emergency. At any time, you can request your form back to update as needed by contacting Terri Shurr or Brenda Reichart. Please contact Terri or Brenda with any questions.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER – Do you find comfort in prayer? Have you seen the impact that prayer can have in your life, or the life of those that you pray for? I hope that you can answer yes to both of those questions. We all have different ways of praying and different times that we do it, and that is ok. What is most important is that we continue to pray at all times and under all circumstances. Think of how powerful it could be if Christians throughout the country were all praying at the same time. That is what is going to happen on Thursday, May 2, 2024. That date has been designated as the National Day of Prayer for 2024. This year Bern Lutheran Church will participate in this event as we did in 2021, by having members commit to 30 minute slots of time from 8:00 a.m. to 8 p.m. and spend that time in prayer. You are invited to do this from the comfort of your home, or in the Sanctuary at church, the doors will be open. I hope that many of you will be willing to participate in this 12 continuous hours of prayer from our congregation. Please choose the time that works best for you from the schedule posted on the bulletin board, or call the

church and your name can be added to the schedule. If the time that you prefer has been taken and there is not an opening that works for you, that is ok too. I don't think God will mind if we double up.

LICENSED LAY MINISTERS (LLM) – Many of you are already aware, there are a number of pastoral vacancies within the Northeast Synod, and only a small number of candidates coming out of seminary of looking for a change that would be able to fill those vacancies. As a result, the synod is looking at other options to provide spiritual support to its congregations. One of the options now available is for those who feel a calling to serve to become a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM). As a LLM you can support your own congregation, or others within your community. Details regarding the program and the role of the LLM are posted on the bulletin board in the hallway. If you are interested in becoming a LLM, please speak to Brenda Reichart. The Christian Education Committee has funds available that will cover the \$1,000 formation fee and 75% of the cost of the 4 additional Foundational Courses. We have many gifted individuals within our congregation who would be excellent candidates for this program. If you are feeling that call to share your gifts, please pray for God to help you to discern if this is the best way for you to share them.

SOCIAL HOURS RETURN! – In response to a suggestion placed in the suggestion box, social hours will be resuming! They will be held the last Sunday of each month, immediately following worship. The first one is scheduled for April 28th. There are a few more slots open for contributors. Please sign-up on the sheet on the bulletin board if you would like to “host” the social hour, as well as those who would like to contribute to it. The host is responsible for setting up for the social hour, making the coffee, and cleaning up at the end. The host can be an individual, a family, a committee, or a small group of friends. Those who sign up to contribute can bake or purchase items to be served.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Members: Lucy Moyer, JoAnn Ketz, Jane Battaglieri, Robert Hissinger, Donna Marks, Pauline Shuman, Lisa Miller, Myra Bernhart, and Ruth Keeney

Family and Friends: Debra Kennedy, Joan Hoster, Angie, Eddie Kissling, Bill Manus, Kelly Cockrum, Terry Hine, Ziomara, Nick Odagis, Lara Pappas, Danielle Roberts, Sheri Mafeo, Eleanor, Glenva, Warren, Courtney Davis, Giselle Davis, Joanne King, Tim Brown, Robin Brown, Matt DeLeon, Pastor Joyce Seip, Ashley Rizzuto, Philip Triantis, Mike, Peggy Deemer, Brian, Jamie Hey, Glenn Jones, Kailey, Renee Fullmer, Patrick, Susan, Owen Hey, Joyce, Rev. Fred Foerster, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tuckerton and Pastor Lauren Wolfe Blatt.



Always Room for One More

When Jesus says “I am” in the Gospel of John, he unlocks a new perspective on his love. In today’s reading, when Jesus declares, “I am the good shepherd,” we can imagine our Lord caring for us and guiding us. We picture ourselves as his sheep. It’s reassuring to hear that we aren’t alone to navigate the dangers and challenges of this world. We have a loving shepherd who is looking out for us.

Jesus loves us so much that he goes above and beyond the shepherd’s role as a caretaker. He gives up his own life so our sins can be forgiven and we can receive eternal life. That’s what being a good shepherd means—having such a close relationship with the sheep that the shepherd will stop at nothing to protect them. The shepherd will lay down his own life so his sheep can have life.

When we hear Jesus’ promise to be our good shepherd, we must not miss his commitment to gather up the sheep that aren’t yet part of his flock. They, too, will listen to Jesus’ voice. Responding to his loving call, they will become part of the one flock that follows Jesus as their good shepherd, their Savior, and their Lord. No matter how many sheep are already jostling for space, there is always room for one more. Just like there is always room at our holy communion table for one more person to eat the bread, drink the wine, and receive the gifts of God’s mercy and grace. We can always squeeze closer to the sheep around us to let one or more sheep enter Jesus’ flock, thankful that the flock is growing and that we get to listen to the loving voice of our good shepherd, together.