

# Church on the Hill

A Congregation of the  
Reformed Church in America  
167-07 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Flushing, NY 11358

**March 10, 2024**



**Beseeking**

**By Hannah Garrity**

**Inspired by Matthew 16: 21-23**

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**Rev. Sally Ann Castle — Interim Minister**

**Mr. Sean Cotty — Music Director**

# ORDER OF WORSHIP

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

**BOLD** – Congregation responds

\* – Congregation Stands

**Prelude**

Improvisation on “St. Columba”

Sean Cotty

**Welcome**

**Votum**

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. **Amen.**

**Sentences of Scripture**

\* **Call to Worship**

On our worst days, **God is good.** On our best days, **God is good.** When life is consistent, **God is good.** And when life turns on its head, **God is good.** Day and night, Monday through Sunday, **God is good. God is here. God is love.** Hold tight to that good news. Let us worship God!

\* **Hymn No. 531**

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

**Call to Confession**

There's a moment in our scripture today when Jesus turns to Peter, named “the rock” of the church, and says, “Get behind me, Satan!” I don't know about you all, but that's a pretty bad day for Peter. It's a pretty bad day when Jesus calls you Satan! Fortunately, this absurd moment comforts me with the knowledge that even Peter made mistakes. Peter, who was given the keys to Heaven. Peter, Jesus' right-hand man, made mistakes just like me. And still, Jesus chose him. Knowing that, let us speak honestly with God. For even on our worst days, we belong to God, and that will never change. Join me in prayer—

**Prayer of Confession**

**Holy God, We often find ourselves moving through a world that does not make sense. Like Peter, we want to yell out, “This should not happen!” We want to control scenarios beyond our reach. We want to hold your world in our hands. Forgive us for the moments when we lead with declarations instead of curiosity. Forgive us for arguing when we could listen. Forgive us for fixating on one truth, when we could open ourselves up to many.**

**Soften our hard edges and teach us how to listen. With hope in our hearts we pray, Amen.**

## **Kyrie**

*Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.*

*Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.*

*Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.*

## **Words of Forgiveness**

Friends, no matter how many times you have dug your heels in, no matter how many fights you have wanted to pick with God, no matter how many times you have disagreed, raged, or clung to what you know instead of embracing holy change— we worship a God of grace. Nothing can separate us from God's love, not even a stubborn attitude or a tense heart. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

*(water is poured into the baptismal font)*

God's love for us will always be deeper than we can imagine. We are seen. We are loved. And we are forgiven. Now follow Peter, and go be the Church in the world. **Amen.**

## **Anthem**

Blessed Jesu, Fount of Mercy

Antonin Dvorak

*Blessed Jesu, fount of mercy,*

*We, Thy faithful in Thy Passion,*

*All Thy sorrows share with thee.*

## **Prayer of Illumination**

Listening God, if we could attach ourselves to you, we would. We would scribble your scripture onto our tender hearts. We would weave your good news into the fiber of our being. We would bind ourselves to you, but instead, we wander. **Instead of attaching ourselves to you, we find ourselves swept up in the business of the day. Like a seesaw of faithfulness, we move back and forth, up and down, constantly trying to find you in the midst of it all. So speak clearly to us now. Quiet the distractions long enough for us to affix ourselves to your good news. We are listening. We are hungry. We are hopeful. Amen.**

## **Lenten Psalter**

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

Doris Cosmatos

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from

trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

### **Gospel Reading**

### **Matthew 16: 21-23**

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

### **\* Gloria Patri**

***Glory be to the Father,  
And to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

### **\* Hymn for Lent** (see following page)

The Way

### **Sermon**

"I'm Fixed Upon It"

Rev. Sally Ann Castle

### **Affirmation of Faith**

**I believe in a God of second chances, a God who sees through my stubbornness and holds my fear with tenderness. I believe that this God of second chances uses ordinary people like Peter to do good in the world. Therefore, I believe and hope that God can use me too. I believe that from time to time, God invites us to imagine the impossible. I believe that from time to time, God invites us to change our minds. This change is holy and important work, although challenging. When fear and scarcity plague me, or when the impossible feels out of reach, I believe that God meets**



me with grace and invites me to follow. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

## The Way

RATHBUN 8.7.8.7

Words by Anna Strickland, 2023

Music by Ithamar Conkey, 1851



Faith - ful - ly I learned to fol - low  
Life was ea - sy, faith was sta - ble  
Thread by thread my faith un - rav - eled  
Though the way leads through steep can - yons



Step by step and not to stray  
Then the path - way climbed up - hill  
When the way be - came un - known  
I sur - ren - der my con - trol



March - ing on with proud bra - va - do  
Life got hard - er past the cra - dle  
So - lid ground gave way to gra - vel  
Christ is still my sure com - pan - ion



Claim - ing Je - sus as the way  
Je - sus Christ I fol - lowed still  
So I cling to Christ a - lone  
As the path be - fore un - folds

*The King of love my shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am His,  
And He is mine forever.*

*Where streams of living water flow,  
My ransomed soul He leadeth,  
And where the verdant pastures grow,  
With food celestial feedeth.*

*In death's dark vale I fear no ill,  
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me,  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still;  
Thy cross before to guide me.*

*And so through all the length of days,  
Thy goodness faileth never.  
Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise  
Within Thy house forever.*

## Offering

\* **Doxology** (verse 3)

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

***O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.***

## Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving

### Prayers of the People

#### *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.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the Kingdom and the power  
And the glory, forever. Amen.**

\* **Hymn No. 648**

O Jesus I Have Promised

## **Sending**

Beloved wanderer, as you leave this place, may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve. May you look for God in every face. May you find the courage to get out of the boat, to run to the tomb, and to speak of your faith. And when the world falls apart, may you hear God's voice deep within, saying, "Take heart, it is I, be not afraid." You are called. You are blessed. In both your ups and your downs, you always belong to God. Go now in peace. Go trusting that good news. **Amen.**

## \* **Benediction**

**Response** (please be seated)      The King of Love My Shepherd Is (ending)

*And so through all the length of days,  
Thy goodness faileth never.  
Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise  
Within Thy house forever.*

**Postlude**      Siciliano from Sonata for Flute in Eb Major      J.S. Bach (arr. Widor)

\*\*Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.



# Announcements

## NEXT SUNDAY

March 17th, 2024

Wandering Heart: “Teach Me”

Focal Scriptures: Matthew 18: 15-22, Psalm 119: 9-16

Theme Connections: Peter is often all or nothing—either resisting Jesus or drawing closer to him in earnest. In this scripture, we see a version of Peter who is hungry to learn. His posture is humble and open—he wants to

absorb Jesus’ teachings like a wet sponge. He asks a question and might expect a straightforward answer: “How many times should I forgive?” Instead, Jesus’ math is not predictable—it’s infinite. Forgiveness is abundant; grace is not earned. In your own faith, do you find comfort in theological formulas? Do you wish for straightforward answers? Can you let go of black-and-white thinking and instead embrace the infinite colors of grace?



## CALL FOR PASSION PLAYERS

Join the cast! Be a passion player!

This is your opportunity to participate in one of the most inspiring worship services of the year. COTH will present the Passion Narrative on Palm/Passion Sunday, March 24th during the worship service. There are speaking parts as well as audience participation roles. Please see Pastor Sally Ann if you would like to play a part in this special event.

Parts for all ages available! There will be two rehearsals (TBD).

## BIBLE STUDY

Lenten Bible Study- Tuesday, March 12th at 7 pm on Zoom

Fourth Week of Lent - Psalm 23: Tables

*Pause, Spending Lent with the Psalms* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell

The invitation to pause with the Psalms began on Ash Wednesday with Psalm 51. Each chapter helps readers to connect an image drawn from a psalm, such as paths, faces, blessing, tables, waiting, thanksgiving, listening, being alone or abandoned, and hands, with their own lives. At the close of each chapter, readers are invited to try a different prayer practice to help them continue to reflect on the theme and psalm each day. This intentional engagement—without feeling burdensome—opens just enough space and time for a creative spiritual practice to flourish, sustaining the life of faith during the Lenten season in ways that can make a difference in God’s world.

Check the Weekly Email for Zoom information!

## QUEENS COMMUNITY CHILDREN’S CHOIR

The Queens Community Children's Choir is starting its Spring semester in March. The 8-week program runs from 3/7- 5/9 (no classes on 3/28 and 4/25). We will meet on Thursday afternoons from 5:00-6:00 pm in the Music Room. These rehearsals will culminate in a grand end-of-semester performance on Saturday, May 11th at 2 pm in the Church on the Hill sanctuary. All children are welcome.

### **COFFEE HOUR**

Please join us for coffee hour after the service, downstairs in Gessner Hall. Thank you to Joyce Tambini and the Congregational Care Committee for putting together today's Coffee Hour!

### **OFFERING**

If you feel called to give, offering plates are located in the rear of the sanctuary, where you can leave your offering upon entry or exit of the sanctuary.

### **BARGAIN BOUTIQUE**

The Bargain Boutique is open on Saturdays from 10 am- 1 pm. Donations are accepted on Saturdays only. \*We are unable to accept: Electronics, TVs, Furniture, Textbooks, and Large Toys/Stuffed Animals\* Find us on Instagram @cothbargainboutique for a fun look inside the Boutique and to find out about special sales and hidden gems!

### **JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST!**

Be sure to sign up for our email list to keep up with the latest Church on the Hill happenings through the weekly email and the Beacon. A sign-up form can be found on **[churchonthehill.org](http://churchonthehill.org)**

## Prayer Requests

*If you would like to add a loved one to the prayer list, or if your loved one no longer needs to be on the prayer list, please contact the church office at [office@churchonthehill.org](mailto:office@churchonthehill.org)*

Karin Bennitt

The Bermudez Family

Diane Blagburn

Hank Boechmann

Katie and Clayton Buckley

The Cappellano Family

Richard D.

Thomas Degnen

Gabriel DeMelo

Lucas Ditta

Joanne Dunckhahn

Alison Friedman

Michael Gittens

Adam Gonzalez

The Greer Family

Rhoda Jabbour

Rudy Jakob

Mary Kansfield

The Family of

Rev. Norm Kansfield

Mike Kenny

Susan Laurita

Donna Lemay

The Liao/ Lin Family

Gessa Markantonis

Rose McLain

Donna McLernon

Christian Mender

Kathy Mender-Murphy

Paul Mobius

Mary Moder

Lillian Mukai

Marti and Tom Pearce

The Family of Rev. Bob Perless

Iris and Ralph Prager

Nina Proschel

Patrick Sullivan

Ed Surujballi

Virginia Young



The sanctuary is looped for the hard of hearing. In order to connect to the system, please sit in the north set of pews (on your right when you enter the sanctuary) and set your hearing device to the "T" setting.



Nancy Gessner, Victor Han, **Vice Presidents**  
Nancy Gessner, **Clerk**

*Consistory & Staff*

**Elders**

Linda Diez  
Nancy Gessner (VP)  
Victor Han (VP)  
Rhoda Jabbour  
Sarah White

**Deacons**

Ginny Chan  
Emerson Chen  
Jerry Lutz  
Adriene Toy

**Sean Cotty**, Music Director: [sean.cotty@churchonthehill.org](mailto:sean.cotty@churchonthehill.org)

**Amanda Sudolsky**, Office Administrator: [office@churchonthehill.org](mailto:office@churchonthehill.org)

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THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT  
Wandering Heart: "I'm fixed upon it"

**Open Hands**

We are born with the ability  
to wrap our fingers around another,  
to hold tight to what we know.  
Maybe that's where the instinct comes from—  
this clinging,  
this sinking,  
this holding on.  
Maybe that's why Peter cries, "Never!"  
when Jesus must leave.  
From the very beginning  
we've known how to hold tight.  
So I pray:  
open up my hands.  
Uncurl my fingers  
one by one.  
Loosen the grip  
that I hold unyielding.  
Remind me that birds must fly  
and children must grow  
and leaves must fall.  
And even though  
we are born with the ability  
to hold tight,  
we can learn how to love  
with open hands.



# Easter Donations

The Worship Committee has decided not to ask for donations for the Sanctuary flowers this year but still wishes to continue our tradition of honoring those we remember and appreciate at Easter. This year we are asking that you donate to any of the church funds (Music, Food for Kids, Community Concerts, Sanctuary Technology, etc.) and as in the past indicate that your donation is in memory of/in appreciation of/in honor of someone you choose. These donations will be listed in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

Thank you for your donation.

Please accept my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ (fund).

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of • In appreciation of • In honor of

(Circle one)

All gift mentions will be included in a special insert in the Easter bulletin. Please make checks payable to "Church on the Hill", with the name of the fund you wish your donation to go to in the memo. Ginny Chan will be accepting donations after church during Lent. If you'd like to contribute online, please visit our [Tithe.ly](#) page. All donations must be received by March 24th to ensure that they will be in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

## **Nominations for Consistory Election**

In May, at our annual congregational meeting, Church on the Hill will elect **one (1) new Elder** and **one (1) new Deacon** to the consistory. At this time, the congregation has the opportunity to nominate members of the congregation to serve in this office. Members of the congregation are able to nominate themselves.

When discerning whom you might nominate to serve in this office, please keep in mind the following:

- 1) Elders are women and men set apart for a ministry of care and oversight of all the ministries and members of the congregation. The elders are called to provide spiritual care to the members of the church and to the minister. They are to be people of spiritual commitment, desiring to love and serve both God and neighbor in the church and in the world.
- 2) Deacons are women and men set apart for a ministry of mercy, service, and outreach. Deacons are called to oversee the benevolences of the church and to care for those in material need. They are to be people of spiritual commitment and compassionate spirit, desiring to love and serve both God and neighbor in the church and in the world.
- 3) Nominations and elections are not a popularity contest in the church. Rather, we should prayerfully consider the character, wisdom, spiritual gifts, and talents of individuals that will contribute to the leadership of the congregation and the overall mission of the church.