Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

This Sunday is the 22nd day of Easter. This Sunday is also known as “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Jesus is called the “gate” of the sheep in today’s gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. From our baptisms, we go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all creation.

***Let Us Be Gathered***

**Song**

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, let us begin our worship devotions with the hymn “The King of Love My Shepherd Is.” A pair of Lutheran musicians known together as “2GuitarGirls” lead us today in our singing of ELW #502. Here is the link: <https://youtu.be/d8ooUnTu0XA>.

*1            The King of love my shepherd is,*

*whose goodness faileth never;*

*I nothing lack if I am his*

*and he is mine forever.*

*2            Where streams of living water flow,*

*my ransomed soul he leadeth*

*and, where the verdant pastures grow,*

*with food celestial feedeth.*

*3            Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,*

*but yet in love he sought me,*

*and on his shoulder gently laid,*

*and home, rejoicing, brought me.*

*4            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.*

*5            Thou spreadst a table in my sight;*

*thine unction grace bestoweth;*

*and, oh, what transport of delight*

*from thy pure chalice floweth!*

*6            And so, through all the length of days,*

*thy goodness faileth never.*

*Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise*

*within thy house forever.*

Let us pray.

O God our shepherd,
you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death.
Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security
to the joyous feast prepared in your house,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

***Let Us Hear God’s Word***

*A reading from Acts:*

  42[The baptized] devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
  43Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2)

*The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.*

*A reading from the Psalms:*

 1The Lord is my shepherd;
  I shall not be in want.
 2The 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.
 4Though 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.
 6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
  and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

*A reading from First Peter:*

  19It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. 20If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval. 21For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.
 22“He committed no sin,
  and no deceit was found in his mouth.”
23When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. 24He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2)

*Word of God. Word of life.
Thanks be to God.*

*The holy gospel according to John.*

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

  [Jesus said:] 1“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. 2The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. 3The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.
  7So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10)

*The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.*

**Reflection on the Readings**

On Monday, Missouri and Joplin begin a process of re-opening services and business. Such re-openings bring hope to some and fear to others. The SARS-Cov-2 virus which has affected the lives of everyone in the world is not eradicated or gone. The likelihood of resurgent illness caused by the COVID-19 disease is still very high. There is still great risk and danger for our communities and for people we love.

And so, while re-openings are beginning, it is not a return to “normal” that we face. People should continue to wear face masks as a means of protecting and safeguarding others. We should continue to respect and maintain health-supporting distances from one another, be careful in the washing of our hands, avoid unnecessary and large gatherings, and continue with many other precautions.

There will be those who quickly abandon such concerns and who urge others to do the same. But, as we hear in our reading today from First Peter, we must endure for a while longer. We must not go astray like sheep, but rather stick with the shepherd. Those others? Well, they are “strangers” and “thieves and robbers.”

Although it is not in today’s readings, I’m mindful as well of the story of Noah. Together with his family, Noah shepherded the future of the world in God’s ark and weathered a world-altering storm for forty days. Then, at the end of the storm, did they immediately fling open the doors of the ark and jump onto dry land? No, they didn’t!

Instead, what we hear in Genesis 8 is that:

6At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made 7and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. 8Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; 9but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. 10He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; 11and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. 12Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

Noah and his family and the animals they had saved showed patience. They waited. They waited for the effects of the storm to subside. After forty days of storm and rain, there were stages of recovery. The raven went first. Then, weeks later, a dove. Then, after another week, a second dove went out. Then, even after that first olive leaf was returned to the ark, Noah and his family held to yet another week of waiting. Although the story in the Bible gets a little confusing to follow, it seems that there were another 150 days of slow recovery time that followed the 40 days of rain.

It will be like that for us as well. We will take things slowly and carefully. We will go not around the gate, but through it as it is opened. We will not listen to the voices of strangers, thieves, or robbers. We will continue to keep the cautions necessary for everyone’s health, for the sake of the whole community, for the well-being of people who are still in need. We will be led by the voice of the shepherd – the voice we know and recognize.

That is our baptismal call as we journey through and then from the valley of death. That is the gate that Jesus opens for us and for all sheep to pass through – the gate to pastures where everyone may have life, and have it abundantly!

*15Then [when it was again safe to walk on the earth] God said to Noah, 16“Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh — birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 18So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. 19And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.* (Genesis 8)

**Hymn of the Day**

Let us join together in singing, “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” (ELW #789). Through a recording from 2016, Bryan Odeen leads our hymn of the day. Here is the video link: <https://youtu.be/e9agIolRKQU>.

*1            Savior, like a shepherd lead us;*

*much we need your tender care.*

*In your pleasant pastures feed us,*

*for our use your fold prepare.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*you have bought us; we are yours.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*you have bought us; we are yours.*

*2            We are yours; in love befriend us,*

*be the guardian of our way;*

*keep your flock, from sin defend us,*

*seek us when we go astray.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*hear us children when we pray.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*hear us children when we pray.*

*3            You have promised to receive us,*

*poor and sinful though we be;*

*you have mercy to relieve us,*

*grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*early let us turn to you.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*early let us turn to you.*

*4            Early let us seek your favor,*

*early let us do your will;*

*blessed Lord and only Savior,*

*with your love our spirits fill.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*you have loved us, love us still.*

*Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus,*

*you have loved us, love us still.*

**Prayers of Intercession**

Penned up in our homes but united in the one flock of believers, we pray for the church, the earth, the world, and all in need, asking God our Shepherd using the words, “restore our life.”

*A brief silence.*

For the church, O God, we pray: that we will hear and follow your voice calling to us in the word; that bishops and pastors be sustained for their shepherding tasks; that churches devastated by the virus be upheld; that in this time churches find ways to continue their ministries of education and service:

*A brief silence.*

O God, faithful shepherd of the church, restore our life.

For the earth we pray: that lands and waters be renewed; that animals and plants enjoy safe growth; that rain and soil nurture the fields; that drought and floods in Yemen be averted and locusts of Kenya cease their frenzy:

*A brief silence.*

O God, steadfast gardener of the earth, restore our life.

For the nations of the world we pray: that governors and legislators cooperate for the good of all; that medical experts be heeded; that government moneys serve the nations’ greatest needs; that during Ramadan Muslims are granted release from prejudice:

*A brief silence.*

O God, fearless peacemaker of the nations, restore our life.

For a world so economically divided, we pray: that the millions of those unemployed be given food and shelter now and jobs in the future; that children find a fruitful means of education; that refugees be safeguarded from violence and prejudice; that, inspired by the early Christians, those who have means become ever more generous to those who endure great want:

*A brief silence.*

O God, just protector of the poor, restore our life.

For all in need we pray: that those afflicted with the coronavirus be cared for; that the sick be healed; that those in despair find hope; that those who are lonely be comforted; that medical workers be safeguarded; that Valetta, Paul, Vallie, LaVaune, Patty, Kathy, Frank, Lisa, Rita, April, Bev, Bob, Beth, Marlene, and all others we name may receive the best possible care:

*A brief silence.*

O God, mighty healer of the sick, restore our life.

For our own desires we pray: that like the biblical shepherds Rachel and David, each tending their father’s flocks, we will be blessed for the fulfilling our tasks; and that you hear the cries of our hearts:

*A longer period of silence.*

O God, tender shepherd of each of us, restore our life.

We praise you for those who have died in the faith and we pray that at our end, as sheep of your own fold, as lambs of your own flock, we will be gathered into your mercy, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

*A brief silence.*

O God, gateway to life, restore our life.

Into your everlasting arms we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your care for us, through Jesus Christ, our guardian and friend. Amen.

**Offering Prayer**

Merciful God,
our ordinary gifts seem small,
but you make of them an abundance,
just as you do with our lives.
Feed us again at your table
for service in your name,
in the strength of the risen Christ.
**Amen.**

***Let Us Be Sent in Service***

**Song**

Stanzas 2-4 of the song “Have No Fear Little Flock” (ELW #764) were written by Marjorie Ann Jillson. Marjorie was born in Detroit in 1931, studied at the College of Wooster, taught for the deaf at Gallaudet College in Washington, DC, and then became a dental secretary in Detroit. She struggled with thyroid disease throughout her life and said, “What I learned from my own illness is that God will restore you, even if your body has to die first.”

A musician from Augustana Lutheran Church in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago leads us in our singing. Here is the video link: [https://youtu.be/H8XXgTlPAIQ](https://youtu.be/H8XXgTlPAIQ%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

*1            Have no fear, little flock;*

*have no fear, little flock,*

*for the Father has chosen*

*to give you the kingdom;*

*have no fear, little flock!*

*2            Have good cheer, little flock;*

*have good cheer, little flock,*

*for the Father will keep you*

*in his love forever;*

*have good cheer, little flock!*

*3            Praise the Lord high above;*

*praise the Lord high above,*

*for he stoops down to heal you,*

*uplift and restore you;*

*praise the Lord high above!*

*4            Thankful hearts raise to God;*

*thankful hearts raise to God,*

*for he stays close beside you,*

*in all things works with you;*

*thankful hearts raise to God!*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Almighty God, you give us the joy of celebrating our Lord’s resurrection. Give us also the joys of life in your service, and bring us at last to the full joy of life eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

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.

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The God of all grace  ☩ bless us now and forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!