FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

Traditional Worship Service
The First Sunday of Lent

February 22, 2026

The Service for the Lord's Day

WE GATHER

PRELUDE Prelude on an Irish Church Melody — Charles V. Stanford

WELCOME AND COMMUNITY LIFE

CALL TO WORSHIP

The good news of the gospel is:
manna in the desert,
water turned into wine,
love after loss,
forgiveness after pain.
The good news of the gospel is:
release for the captive,
hope for the hopeless,
mourning turned to dancing,
and strangers turned to friends.
So come on in.
There's no time to waste!
This surprising good news is here for you.
Let us worship this good-news God.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

*GATHERING HYMN

Here in This Place (from *Glory to God* – see insert) — GATHER US IN

WE CONFESS

CALL TO CONFESSON

*Please stand if you are able.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving God, somewhere along the way we picked up the message that in order to be faithful, we have to be serious. We have to pray on our knees without ceasing. We have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies. We have to check our wiggles *and* our questions at the door. But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—unruly and untamed. You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant. And all of a sudden, we wonder: Can we be like that mustard seed? Can we be faithful and unruly? Can we be playful and curious? Can we be messy and still be yours? We know the answer already. The Spirit whispers: *of course, of course, of course.* Forgive our doubt. Pull us closer into your embrace. With faith like a mustard seed, we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God's grace is wild and unruly. God's mercy is abundant and surprising. God's love is expansive and unending. So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?" the answer is and always will be: ***of course, of course, of course.*** This is the good news of the gospel. **Thanks be to God! Amen.**

WE LISTEN

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE — Jim Stahl

Gospel: Mathhew 13:31-32, John 2:1-11

Leader: The word of the Lord;

People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON — Rev. Karen Kinney

"Unexpected Good News!"

WE RESPOND

MOMENT FOR SILENT REFLECTION

When have you witnessed something flourishing unexpectedly? What stories of surprising good come to mind?

*SERMON HYMN

Great God of Every Blessing (from *Glory to God* – see insert) — AURELIA

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. It sounds like welcome and feels like home. It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy. It sounds like love and feels like a seat at the table,so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ. I have seen it alive in the world. And even when my heart aches, even when wars rage, even when mercy feels out of reach, I remember the one who welcomed the children and led with nonviolence. I remember the one who cared for the vulnerable and inspired those around him. I remember that the good news really is good news, for I have seen it alive in the world. Thanks be to God! Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

MINUTE FOR MISSION AND OFFERING

Call to Give

Offertory Wondrous Love arr. Paul Christiansen

Chancel Choir

*Doxology #592

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

*SENDING HYMN #420

God of Grace and God of Glory CWM RHONDDA

*BENEDICTION

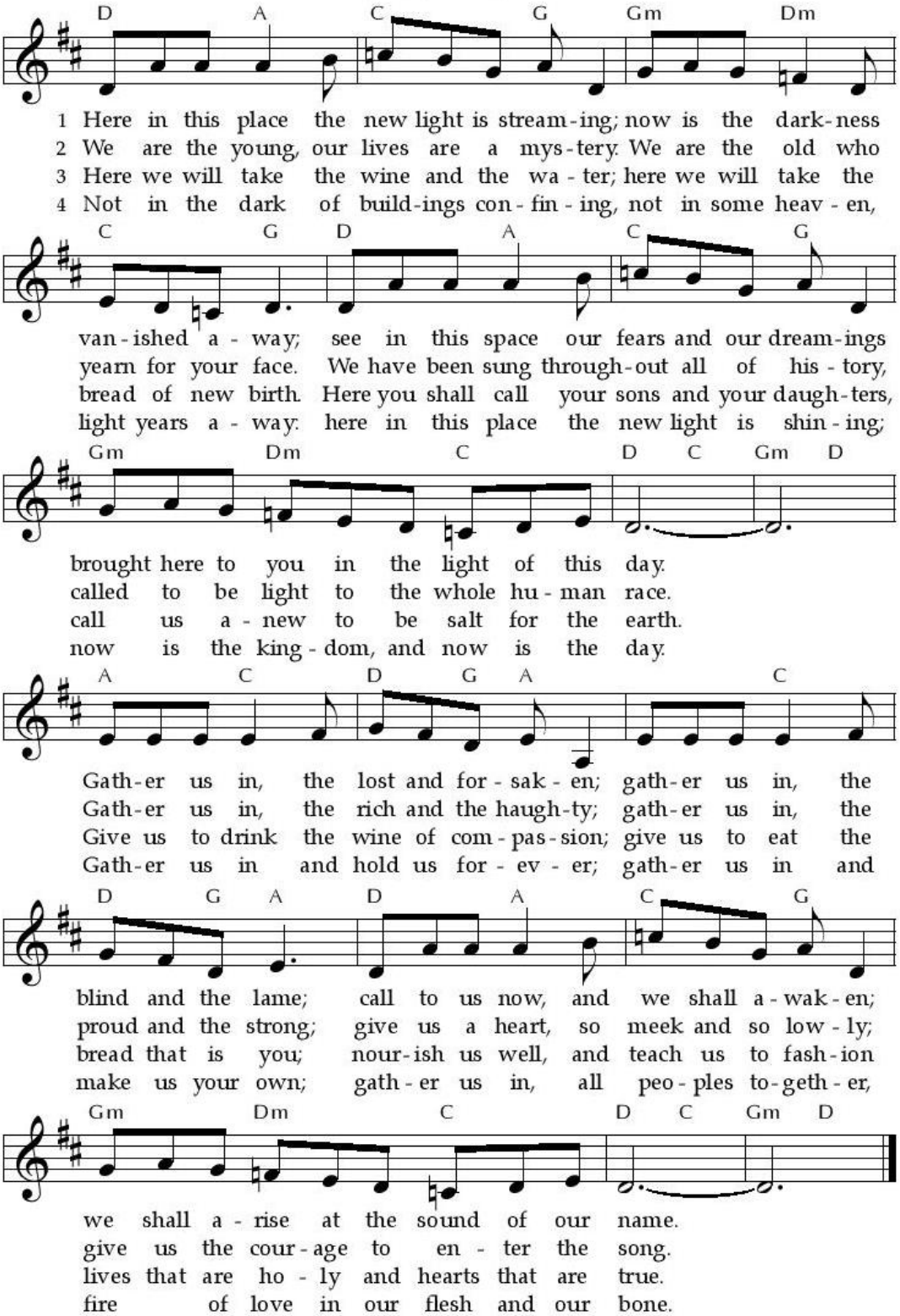
As you leave this place, when you meet anger, speak with love. When you meet fear, speak with hope. When you meet pain, speak with gentleness. But no matter what, speak this good news. For the good news of the gospel is love and justice for all. It is joy that surprises, and nonviolence that transforms. The good news of the gospel is alive in the world, so go forth speaking. For if you won't, then who will? Thanks be to God for this good, good news. Amen.

POSTLUDE Postlude in F Eric Thimanhorne

Flowers given in memory of their parents by Glenn and Darla Rossetti

Here in This Place 401

Gather Us In
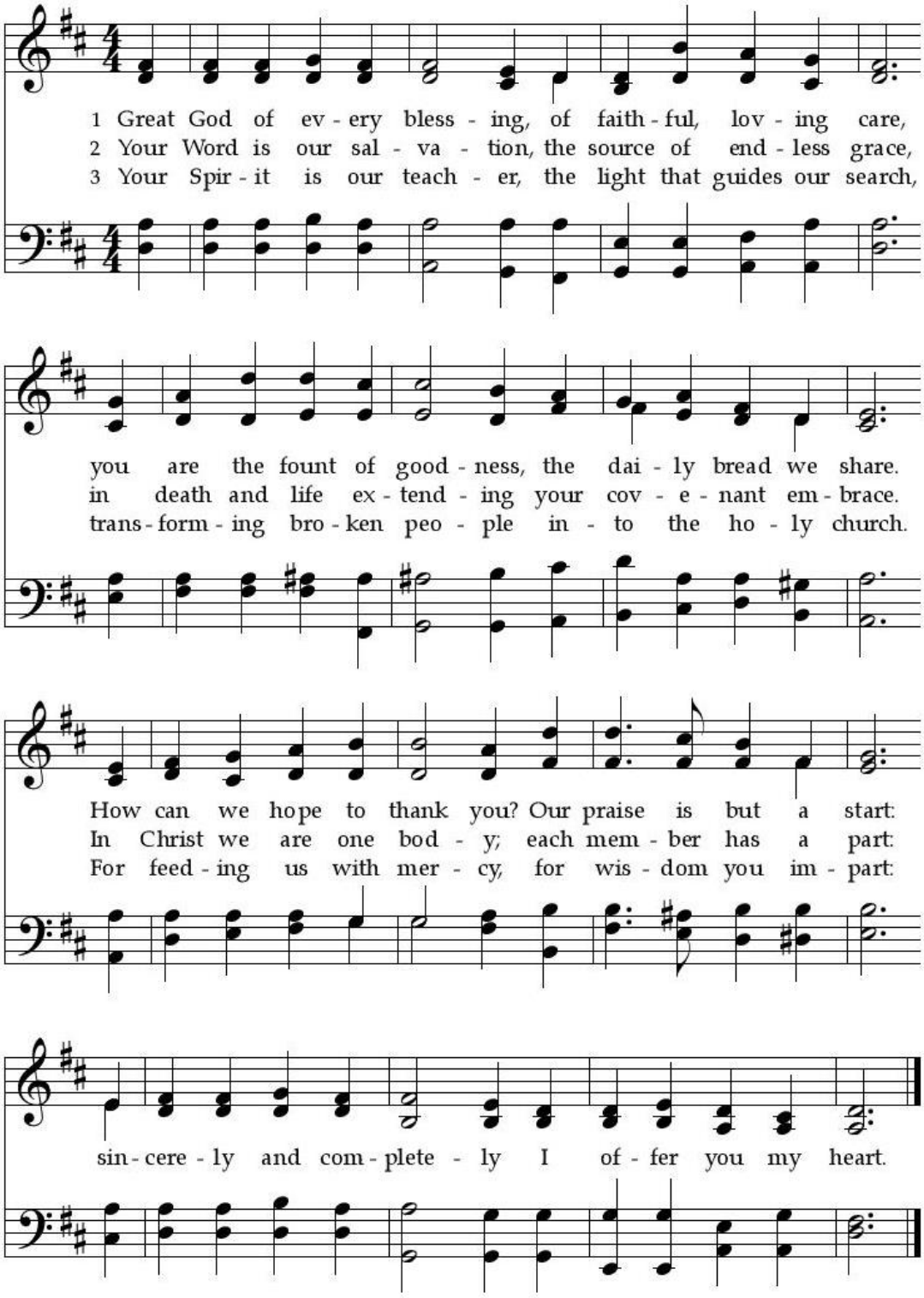


The "you/your" mentioned in every stanza is never identified, but this 1979 hymn is clearly a corporate prayer to God on behalf of the diverse congregation who have assembled for worship, longing to be transformed and used as God's witnesses and for God's purposes.

TEXT and MUSIC: Marty Haugen, 1979
Text and Music © 1982 GIA Publications, Inc.

GATHER US IN
10.9.10.10.D

694 Great God of Every Blessing



Written for the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, this text sums up his liturgical theology, ending each stanza with his motto: *Cor meum tibi offero, Domine, prompte et sincære.* By moving from plural to singular the stanzas show how corporate faith becomes personal piety.

TEXT: David Gambrell, 2009
MUSIC: Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864
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AURELIA
7.6.7.6.D