

Sermon followed by Service

August 22, 2021

Hebrews 10:19-25

Do you have a safe place? A Safe place to go when life gets ugly and dangerous? Where's your safe place? Let's say that the school year is off to a rough start; you can't hide in the bathroom or your dorm room all day - so where's your safe place? When you're waiting for word from your doctor, your lender, your boss - where's your safe place? With COVID - where's your safe place? With maskers and anti-maskers, vaxers and anti-vaxers all getting worked up, when they get in your face, when they get in your mind - where's your safe place? At home, at work, at school, when the biting and bullies are making you sick inside When day after day you hear voices of darkness (Why do you always ...? Why can't you ever ...?), when those voices are taking you to a dark, dark place - where's your safe place? When your conscience is accusing, your anxiety is stressing, your world is judging and demanding - where's your safe place? Where is your safe place?

Which of these situations / challenges are you or the people in your life facing?

We need a safe place, don't we? And the people around us, they need a safe place. Our lesson today shows us the safest of safe places. It's not a bunker in the basement. It's not a video screen or a pretend world you create for yourself up in your head. It's not in a bottle, a baggie, a needle, or a smoke. The safest of safe places is close in, together and tight with God.

Which of these pseudo-safe places are you or people in your life trying?

Some of you expected that answer. And some part of us all is disappointed in that answer. Why? Perhaps we see the hurt in our world, and we see how Christians, even Christians in close, tight and together with God, still hurt. And we can be quick to judge God even as God is working things out, like a newborn can be quick to judge mom even as mom is working things out - "Where's my food, my hug, my burp? Make my life right now!" We're not always good at looking out past right here, right now, are we? We kind of like "my way right here, right now." That's another reason we don't always like God as our safe place. We've got this two-year-old, tween, teen thing going on. We hold out one hand expecting God to give us what we want, but at the same time with our other hand we wave him off: "It's my life, let me do what I want." When people do that to you, how does that go over? There's another set of reasons we might not look to God as our safest safe place - God's judgment - "the soul that sins it shall die" - and our conscience. Most people know how they've waved God off. Most people know - someplace deep inside - that they have crossed God and that instead of being held safe by God, they deserve to be crossed out by God.

*Why might people be disappointed with God as their safe place?
Why might people avoid God as their safe place?*

So most people search and settle for a safe place without God, even apart from God. And they miss out; they miss out on the hope we have. I should make clear what the Holy Spirit packs in that word “hope.” When the Spirit talks of hope, he isn’t talking about a future possibility, a maybe, or even a “more likely than not.” No, when the Spirit talks of hope he is talking about our future reality. Let me say that again - when the Spirit talks of hope he is talking about our future reality with Jesus. When people search and settle for a safe place without God they miss out on that hope, the hope we have. As this world tears itself apart, they miss out on this hope, the hope of being held together for heaven. In this world of hurt, they miss out on this hope that we have - the healing of heaven where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. In this world with so much evil, so much injustice, so much hurt, they miss out on the hope we have - a life made right - not just for the rich and strong - life made right for everyone with Jesus in heaven. In this world gone wrong, that’s the hope we hold to. That’s the future reality we hold to, in our safe place - in close, tight and together with God.

*What hope keeps you going, brightens your day, makes you strong?
How do people in your life see your hope and what your hope does for you?*

But how can we be close in, tight and together with God? How can anyone have that hope after waving God off and crossing him the way we all have? Our lesson tells us how - Jesus! Our lesson is packed with Old Testament imagery fulfilled in Jesus. If we were to unpack it all here, we wouldn’t get to our point for today. Let me unpack this much. How can we be close in, safe, tight and together with God? Jesus, with his flesh and blood sacrifice on the cross. By his blood, Jesus covered over and paid for our sin, the sin of the world. By his flesh, his perfect life and death, Jesus satisfied God’s law and judgment. What does that get to mean for us? Picture for yourself God’s forever safe place in heaven; picture for yourself God’s safe place for you today, safe in his arms. With Jesus, that’s your present and future reality! With Jesus, instead of seeing God, arms crossed, face scowling, his judgment damning and sending you away; with Jesus, you get to see God the Father, arms open, face smiling, inviting and welcoming you in to his hug and his heaven - in close, safe, tight and together with God today and forever.

Connect your “Paragraph 1” conflicts, challenges, and situations with this paragraph’s picture. How do you keep the connection alive?

But that's not all. Our lesson also points us to Jesus as priest over his church. And what is he doing? He's washing us. The Old Testament priests had their way to sprinkle and wash. In the New Testament, Jesus sprinkles our hearts and washes us clean in baptism. We don't need to think that our past guilt disqualifies us from being close to God; we don't need to think that our present struggles disqualify us from being close with God. Baptized into Christ, we get to confess: "God, have mercy on me a sinner." We get to beg: "Lord, make me new; help me to live new with you." And baptized into Christ, we get to know that he has done and he is doing just that. Baptized into Christ, you are washed and forgiven for life in close, tight and together with God.

What does your baptism mean for you?

What do we do with that? First, we live life close in, tight and together with God. **"Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."** Our lesson fits so well for these times today. The congregation in our lesson was struggling with two very different things - the hard life of being a Christian in the face of persecution and the good life of the world. It was so tempting to give up their safe place with God, in close, tight and together with God, and to drift away living the life of the world. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? With so many forces out there against Christ and his church, it can seem easier to just live the life of the world. Add COVID, with the angst and anger about masks and vaccines, with the risk of getting sick, with just the inconvenience and discomfort of it all, it can be so tempting to leave our safe place, in close, tight and together with God and just drift away.

How might we lead people to question whether church is a safe place?

How can we help people to see church as a safe place?

So God calls us to gather together to stick together. Some argue: "I can stick close with God without gathering together with others." Perhaps. But Jesus and his Spirit aren't just interested in me thinking about me and what I want, or you thinking about you and what you want. Jesus and his Spirit are interested in me thinking about you, and you thinking about each other. That's right, Jesus and his Spirit want us concerned and caring about each other's relationship with God. Not to gossip. Not to judge. Not to lecture. Not to get in someone's face and criticize. But to encourage. To encourage love and good deeds. To encourage life close in, safe, tight and together with the Lord.

What helps you to think about your fellow Christians?

What helps you to care about and encourage your fellow Christians?

Our lesson does just that: “**Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**” Those aren’t just a pastor’s words; they’re the words of our Lord and Savior. He knows how gathering together can encourage. Gathering together for worship, gathering together for Bible Study sends a message: “Worship is worth it; Bible Study is worth it; Jesus is worth our time and effort.” Gathering together for worship, gathering together for Bible Study sends a message: “Life isn’t just about my time, my schedule, my convenience; we aren’t here just to live a ‘my life.’ We’re here to live a life that connects our world with Jesus.” Let me add, just one more - Gathering for worship, gathering for Bible Study sends a message: “I’m not alone in this; you’re not alone in this. We’re together, together with Jesus.”

Satan will work to make our words of encouragement to come across as self-serving. What can we do so that our encouragement (to worship, for example) doesn’t come across as self-serving?

How does worshiping together and Bible Study together encourage you?

Who needs that message? I know I do. And there’s several hundred more people in your St. John family who need to hear the same message. Why? “**The Day is approaching.**” We’re living in dangerous times. Our whole family is living in dangerous times. And we have the safest safe place for these dangerous times - in close, tight and together with the Lord. Let’s gather together and encourage each other and help each other to live in close, tight and together with the Lord. Amen.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



Pastor Kevin Raddatz
Principal Jon Woldt
501 West Park Avenue
Libertyville, IL 60048
847-362-4424
www.StJohnsLib.com

August 21 & 22, 2021

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY... we have so many people around us who seem to be eager to crush and divide, judging and demanding with anger and angst.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY... we are reminded of our higher calling - we are set up for times like this to be a people who encourage! Today, we rejoice in this Truth - God's People Gather to Encourage Each Other!

OPENING HYMN

"Son of God, Eternal Savior"

Hymn 492

Son of God, eternal Savior, Source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us, Honors all our human race,
You our head, who, throned in glory, For your own will ever plead:
Fill us with your love and pity; Heal our wrongs and help our need.

Come, O Christ, and reign among us, King of love and Prince of Peace;
Hush the storm of strife and passion; Bid its cruel discords cease.
By your patient years of toiling, By your silent hours of pain,
Quench our fevered thirst for pleasure; Stem our selfish greed for gain.

Bind us all as one together In your Church's sacred fold,
Weak and healthy, poor and wealthy, Sad and joyful, young and old.
Is there want or pain or sorrow? Make us all the burden share.
Are there spirits crushed and broken? Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, So may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted; Freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver, Yours the wealth of land and sea;
We but stewards of your bounty Held in solemn trust will be.

L O Lord, o-pen my lips.

C And my mouth shall de-clare your praise.

L Hasten to save me, O God.

C O Lord, come quickly to help me.

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: **Amen.**

L Give glory to God, our light and our life.

C Come, oh, come, let us wor - ship.

COME, OH, COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD

①

Come, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord,

②

let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;

③

come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,

Repeat for use with canon

come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.

Verses

1. You are a great and a won - drous God,
 2. Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,

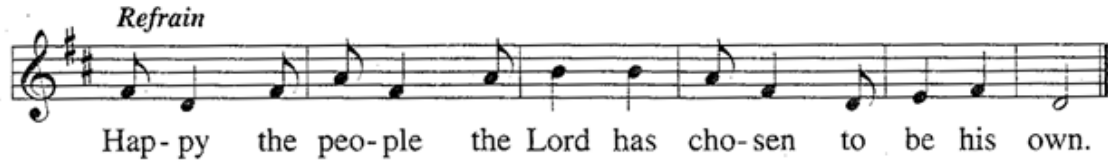
cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
 kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
 You are the God whom we call our own,

to Refrain

you made the seas and the dry land.
 we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PSALM 34



Blessed are they who take re`fuge in him.

The eyes of the LORD are on the `righteous
And his ears are attentive `to their cry.

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who `fear him.
And he de`livers them. *Refrain*

The righteous cry out, and the LORD `hears them.
He delivers them from all their `troubles.

The LORD is close to the broken`hearted,
And saves those who are crushed in `spirit.

The LORD redeems his `servants;
No one who takes refuge in him will `be condemned.

**Glory be to the Father and `to the Son.
And to the Holy `Spirit.**

**As it was in the be`ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. `Amen. *Refrain***

CHILDREN'S TALK

HOLY BAPTISM II
John Richard Smith
Son of Joshua and Rebecca Smith

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave his Church the command to baptize when he said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Scripture makes plain the universal need for Baptism. As children of Adam, we belong to a fallen race. From our parents we inherit a sinful nature and would be lost forever unless delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ. He willingly took on himself the curse of sin and by his death on the cross redeemed us and all people.

Christ's almighty Word gives Baptism its power to save. The apostle Peter declares, "Baptism now saves you." Scripture also clearly teaches that the power and promise of Baptism is intended for young and old alike. On the day of Pentecost the apostle testified, "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call." By water and the Spirit, we are born again and united with Christ and his people as members of the Church.

M: In bringing *this child* to Baptism, you are doing what is God-pleasing. Jesus himself invited little children to become a part of his kingdom when he said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.

M: Receive the sign of the cross on the head and heart to mark you as a redeemed child of Christ.

M: _____, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

M: The Almighty God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - has forgiven all your sins. By your baptism, you are born again and made a dear child of your Father in heaven.

May God strengthen you to live in your baptismal grace all the days of your life. Peace be with you.

EXHORTATION TO PARENTS

M: Dear parent(s), our Lord Jesus Christ, in instituting Baptism, not only commanded that children should be baptized, but that they should be taught to obey everything he has commanded us. I therefore ask you: Do you sincerely intend to bring up _____ in the way of the Lord and to instruct *him* in the truths of God's saving Word so that *he* may grow in faith, serve God with a Christian life, and remain in *his* baptismal grace unto the end? If so, answer: Yes, and *we* ask God to help *us*.

R: **Yes, and we/I ask God to help us/me.**

EXHORTATION TO CONGREGATION

M: Brothers and sisters in Christ, our Lord commands that we teach his precious truths to all who are baptized. Christian love, therefore, urges all of us to assist in whatever manner possible so that _____ may remain a child of God until death. If you are willing to carry out this responsibility, then answer: Yes, and we ask God to help us.

C: **Yes, and we ask God to help us.**

M: Let us pray.

M: Merciful Father in heaven, we thank you for the gift of Baptism by which you wash away sin and give us a new and eternal life. Help us each day to remember that through Baptism you clothe us with Christ that we may stand holy and righteous before you. Look with favor on _____ that *he* may be kept safe by the gift of your Spirit, grow daily in your grace, and live forever by the power of the risen Christ. Make us willing to carry out our responsibilities to all the baptized, so that all may finally come to the blessed joys of heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

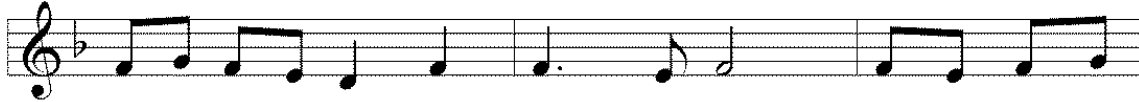
HYMN

"God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It"

Hymn 737 (CWS)



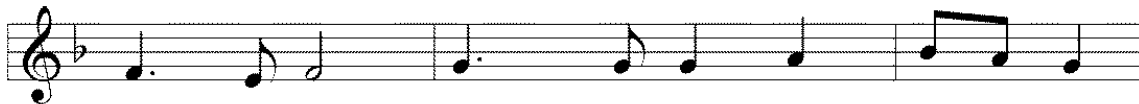
1 God's own child, I glad - ly say it:
 2 Sin, dis - turb my soul no long - er:
 3 Sa - tan, hear this proc - la - ma - tion:
 4 Death, you can - not end my glad - ness:
 5 There is noth - ing worth com - par - ing



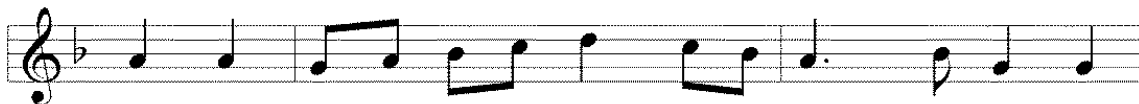
I am bap - tized in - to Christ! He, be -
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! I have
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! Drop your
 I am bap - tized in - to Christ! When I
 To this life - long com - fort sure! O - pen -



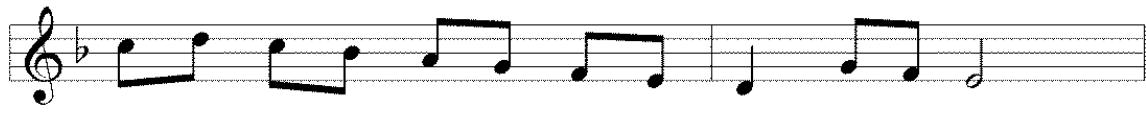
cause I could not pay it, Gave my full re -
 com - fort e - ven strong - er: Je - sus' cleans - ing
 ug - ly ac - cu - sa - tion; I am not so
 die, I leave all sad - ness To in - her - it
 eyed my grave is star - ing: E - ven there I'll



demp - tion price. Do I need earth's trea - sures
 sac - ri - fice. Should a guilt - y con - science
 soon en - ticed. Now that to the font I've
 par - a - dise! Though I lie in dust and
 sleep se - cure. Though my flesh a - waits its



man - y? I have one worth more than an - y
 seize me Since my bap - tism did re - lease me
 trav - eled, All your might has come un - rav - eled,
 ash - es Faith's as - sur - ance bright - ly flash - es:
 rais - ing, Still my soul con - tin - ues prais - ing:



That brought me sal - va - tion free,
In a dear for - giv - ing flood,
And, a - gainst your tyr - an - ny,
Bap - tism has the strength di - vine
I am bap - tized in - to Christ;



Last - ing to e - ter - ni - ty!
Sprink - ling me with Je - sus' blood?
God, my Lord, u - nites with me!
To make life im - mor - tal mine.
I'm a child of par - a - dise!

FIRST LESSON

Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

PSALM 122:1

M: I rejoiced with those who said to me,

C: **“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”**

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 6:30-34

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

HYMN

"We Are Your People"

Hymn 526

We are your people; Lord, by your grace
You dare to make us Christ to our neighbors,
Of ev'ry nation and race.

How can we demonstrate Your love and care?
Speaking or list'ning? Battling or serving?
Help us to know when and where.

Called to portray you, Help us to live
Closer than neighbors, Open to strangers,
Able to clash and forgive.

Glad of tradition, Help us to see
In all life's changing Where you are leading,
Where our best efforts should be.

Joined in community, Breaking your bread,
May we discover Gifts in each other,
Willing to lead and be led.

Lord as we minister In diff'rent ways,
May all we're doing Show that you're living,
Meeting your love with our praise.

SERMON

HYMN

"Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak"

Hymn 561

Lord, speak to us that we may speak In living echoes of your tone.
As you have sought, so let us seek Your straying children, lost and lone.

Oh, lead us, Lord, that we may lead The wand'ring and the wav'ring feet.
Oh, feed us, Lord, that we may feed
Your hung'ring ones with manna sweet.

Oh, teach us, Lord, that we may teach
The precious truths which you impart,
And wing our words that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.

Oh, fill us with your fullness, Lord, Until our very hearts o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word
Your love to tell, your praise to show.

PRAYER 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 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.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING



L The Lord bless and keep you.




C A - men.



L The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



C A - men.



L The Lord grant you peace for all your days.



C A - men.

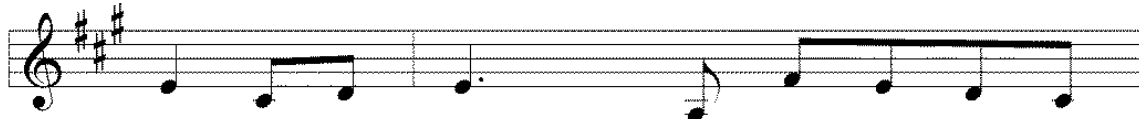
© 1997 GIA Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

CLOSING HYMN

"May the Peace of God"
Hymn 745 (CWS)



I May the peace of God our heav'n - ly Fa -
peace which pass - es un - der - stand -



ther, And the grace of Christ the ris - en
ing, And this grace which makes us what we



Son, And the fel - low-ship of God the
are, And this fel - low-ship of his Com -



Spir - it Keep our hearts and minds with - in his
mun - ion Make us one in spir - it and in



love. And to him be praise for his
heart.

Refrain



glo - rious reign From the depths of earth to the
heights of heav'n. We de - clare the name of the
Lamb once slain— Christ e - ter - nal, the King of
kings.
2 May this kings.

OFFERING

If you prefer online giving, you may scan this code with your mobile device.



Acknowledgments

Texts and music covered under OneLicense.net #A-712373 and CCLI Copyright License 11194382, Size A and CCLI Streaming License CSPL059933. Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ **Morning Praise** Texts revised from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941. “Blessing,” “Come, Oh, Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord,” Prayer Response, “You Are God; We Praise You” ...Marty Haugen. Text, Tune, Setting: © 1995, 1996 by GIA Publications, Inc. 7404 So. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. “Lord, Have Mercy” Kermit Moldenhauer. Tune, Setting: © 2002 Northwestern Publishing House. Opening Sentences: Marty Haugen and Kermit Moldenhauer. Text, Tune, Setting: © 1995, 1996 by GIA Publications, Inc. 7404 So. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. and © 2002 Northwestern Publishing House. **Son of God, Eternal Savior** Text: Somerset T.C. Lowry, 1855-1932, abr., alt. Tune: *The Revivalist*, Troy, NY, 1868 Setting © 1986 James E. Engel **God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say it** Text: Erdmann Neumeister, 1671-1756; tr. Robert E. Voelker, b. 1957 © 1991 Robert E. Voelker. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Tune: Johann Caspar Bachofen, 1695-1755, alt. Setting: Henry V. Gerike, b. 1948 © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved. Used by permission. **We Are Your People** Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936, alt. Tune: John W. Wilson, 1905-92 Text © 1975 Hope Publishing Co.; Tune and Setting © 1980 Hope Publishing Co. **May the Peace of God** Text, Tune, Setting: Keith Getty, b. 1974 and Stuart Townend, b. 1963 © 2005 Thankyou Music; admin. EMI CMG Publishing. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Make the Most of Worship - Note the Cues

Have you noticed how we try to help you prepare for worship? About 10-15 minutes before the service, the pre-service music cues us to quiet our voices and set our minds on the voice of the Lord. About 5 minutes before the service, the ushers light the candles cuing us to ready ourselves to be enlightened with Christ. At service time, the pastor steps before the altar and prays. If you haven't already, pray for your worship and for the pastor! Then we hear the chimes; our hymnals are open to the right page and we are ready to chime in with our voices.

Funeral Calling Tree and Prayer Chain

As a family, we want to be included. When someone in our family needs prayers, we want to pray for them. When someone in our family is taken home to heaven, we want to be there for the family. To help us keep included, we have a Funeral Calling Tree and a Prayer Chain. If you would like to be included and connected with the Funeral Calling Tree and / or the Prayer Chain, please let us know. You can email us, or call us in the office - 847-362-4424.

Please don't assume that if you are on our old lists that we know you want to be on our new lists. Please let us know! If your name is not on the list below, you are not on our Funeral Calling Tree or Prayer Chain. Please let us know if you would like your name added!

Sheila

Jeanne

Nancy

Carol

Patricia

Paul

Kim

Pattie

Lisa

Terry

Children's Talks / Children's Sermons

Is it a Children's Talk or a Children's Sermon? Whatever we call it, I'm always praying that it doesn't turn into a Pastor's Disaster! So why do we have them? To show our children: "Church is for you too!"

Here's what we do. At some point in the service (whenever it suits me and what I want to say), I announce and invite: "It's time for our children's talk." Then our young ones walk up to the front of the church and sit on the floor between the first pew and the first chancel step. It's always helpful to have some of our middle-grade students join them, to sit between the youngest and show them how it's done. Sometimes a parent will bring their young one up front and then sit in the front pew (or even closer on the floor). After our "talk," our children return to their seats and we continue with the service.

"Church is for you too!" There are other ways we show our children that church (and Jesus) is for them too. We don't have to sit in the back and seat our children behind a tall wall of adults; our children do learn to worship well sitting up closer to the front where they can feel more a part of the worship service instead of just part of the "kid's section." We also have Children's Bags stocked with worship helps and we have Children's Bulletins. The Children's Bulletins come in 2 colors, with a preschool version and an older version. I'm told (by parents who quizzed their children about the sermon and service every week) that the Children's bulletins and bags aren't so much a distraction for the mind as a distraction for the hands to help keep the mind in church.

If you have questions about how all that works, ask some of our other parents with children. We all know that most every young child has a rough Sunday now and then. When your child needs a break, we have room to stretch in the back Gathering Area, and in our Fellowship Hall (where the service should be on the screen). When moms and dads wait until the children are older, the children just seem to have their rough Sundays when they are older. So start early with Jesus' invitation: "Bring the little children to me," and we'll all be blessed!