**January 21, 2024 –Third Sunday after Epiphany – Email/At Home Missal**

**The ZOOM link for today’s service, which opens at 9.30 am on January 21, 2024, can be found here:**

**Sunday Worship January 21, 2024 09:30 am ZOOM room opens; service begins at 10:00 am.**

**Join Zoom Meeting click here:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83858523329?pwd=UUpVdCtkTDB0MWhTVkhjSmxvWjFnUT09>**

**Meeting ID: 838 5852 3329 Passcode: 629887**

**You don’t have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of our church Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply): (All Canadian numbers). You can also access the ZOOM from your telephone by using the “One tap mobile” option:**

**+12042727920,,83858523329#,,,,\*629887# Canada**

**+14388097799,,83858523329#,,,,\*629887# Canada**

**Dial by your location:**

**+1 778 907 2071 Canada**

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+1 647 558 0588 Canada**

**Meeting ID: 838 5852 3329 Passcode: 629887**

**Find your local number:** [**https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kz0pHIt5i**](https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kz0pHIt5i)

1. **…………………………………….**
2. **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 21st, 2024 –JANUARY 28th, 2024:**
3. **You will find the video for January 24th, 2024, at the following YouTube link:** [**https://youtu.be/7I5ZQnw00F0**](https://youtu.be/7I5ZQnw00F0)
4. **……………………………………….**

**Coming Events** (save these dates) **bold print - events being held here at St. Peter’s**

Jan. 22 Cambridge Neighbourhood Table at Langs (5:00 pm – 7:30 pm – free dinner & social)

Jan. 30 Cambridge Neighbourhood Table at the Freedom Centre (5:00 pm – 7:30 pm – free dinner & social)

**Feb. 14 Ash Wednesday Service 7:00 pm**

**Feb. 25 Men’s Dessert Event (further details coming!)**

**Mar. 17 Annual General Meeting (further details coming!)**

**Mar. 31 Easter Breakfast (further details coming!)**

Apr. 5-7 Bishop’s Spiritual Retreat for Lay Persons (Mount Carmel, Niagara Falls)

The Life of St. Peter’s for the week of January 21 – January 28, 2024

Monday 6:00 pm TOPS - R.F.F. (Art Room)

Tuesday 7:00 pm Scouts - R.F.F. (Scout Room, Art Room, Fellowship Hall)

Wednesday **10:30 am Bible Study (Art Room)**

 **12:00 pm Meeting – Brown Bag Lunch for Local Pastors**

Thursday

Friday

Saturday **1:30 pm Choir Practice** (Sanctuary)

Sunday **10:00 am Worship Service** – **Worship Service** – A passage from **Mark 5:1-20.**

 (Jesus heals the Gerasene demoniac)

**Pastoral Visit:** Pastor Laura is available for visits by appointment by calling the church office, 519-653-4721. Whether you have a particular pastoral concern or would just like some one-to-one time to get to know Pastor Laura, she would love to meet with you.

1. **…………………………………….**

**Prayer List:**  Bill, Don, Tammy, Alice, Don, Lynn, Helen, Sharon, Donald, Shirley, Clara, Jeff, Aaron, MacKenzie, Rhett, Linda, Jan Ken, Lee, Maria, Deborah, Fred, Anne, Sherri, Carol.

1. **…………………………………….**

**We need you to help feed our neighbourhood!** The freedom Centre has joined with Cambridge Community Table to offer a meal to our community twice a month on Tuesday night. We need volunteers: Food Preparation, set up, take down, meet and Greet. Every hour you can give once or twice a month. Call for information 519-591-6518 or email rosemary@freedomcentre.ca.

1. **…………………………………….**

This Lent and Easter, we will be using the book “Praying the Catechism” by Donald Johnson and Susan Johnson to guide us in a **season of intentional prayer as a community**. This resource invites the reader into a ninety-day journey of prayer and meditation through six sections of Luther’s Small Catechism: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confession. We have embarked on a listening journey with Trinity Centres Foundation as we seek renewal and a sustainable future for our community. Renewal is first and foremost a spiritual journey. My hope is that spending intentional time in prayer as a community with a resource that is foundational for us as Lutherans – the Small Catechism – will help ground us in God, in our identity and values, and help us to pay attention to the Spirit’s movements in our lives and in our community.

To participate:

1. Buy a copy of the book. We will need to order copies through Augsburg Fortress so please sign up on the sheet in the narthex if you would like a copy. The cost will be ~$25/book.

2. Work through the daily devotional on your own, beginning February 19.

3. Sign up for the weekly in-person or virtual sessions with Pastor Laura (dates/times TBD)

**…………………………………….**

**Presiding Pastor: Rev. Laura Sauder**

**Organist & Director of Music: Bradley Moggach**

**Assisting Minister: Helga Morrison**

**Reader: Austin Dykstra**

**Welcome remarks**

**Gathering Hymn: ELW # 512 ‘Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil’**

Lord, let my heart be good soil,

 open to the seed of your word.

 Lord, let my heart be good soil,

 where love can grow and peace is understood.

 When my heart is hard, break the stone away.

 When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.

 When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.

 Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart,

 Lord, let my heart be good soil.

*(Title: Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil; Text & Music: Handt Hanson, b. 1950; Text & Music © 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing, Changing Church, Inc., admin. Augsburg Fortress.All rights reserved. Used by permission. Reprinted and Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #A-727610. All rights reserved.)*

**Land Acknowledgement:**

A: Creator God, you made the earth and all that is in it, and you called all of it good. Open our hearts this day to the goodness of the land on which we gather. Open our hearts to the presence and witness of our indigenous neighbours who have cared for this land for generations before our own. May the calls for truth and reconciliation take root in the good soil of our hearts.

**Greeting**:

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

**Theme Time**

**Prayer of the Day**

Let the light shine today,

in and through us,

in and through your word,

in and through the community in which you plant us.

Let your light shine today,

and re-orient us and our habits and our attention,

so that more and more light might shine forth,

making your kingdom way of life not only visible but accessible.

We ask in the name of the One who is the Light of the world.

Amen.

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**Gospel Acclamation: ACS Setting 12: (page 33) (sung)**

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

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**Reader**:

**The Holy Gospel according to Mark, the 4th chapter.**

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

*May we be equipped by these words to walk in love for God, ourselves, our neighbours, all people, and all God’s creation.*

Jesus began to teach beside the lake again. Such a large crowd gathered that he climbed into a boat there on the lake. He sat in the boat while the whole crowd was nearby on the shore. He said many things to them in parables. While teaching them, he said, “Listen to this! A farmer went out to scatter seed. As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path; and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn’t deep. When the sun came up, it scorched the plants; and they dried up because they had no roots. Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked the seeds, and they produced nothing. Other seed fell into good soil and bore fruit. Upon growing and increasing, the seed produced in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of one hundred to one.” He said, “Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!”

When they were alone, the people around Jesus, along with the Twelve, asked him about the parables. He said to them, “The secret of God’s kingdom has been given to you, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables. This is so that they can look and see but have no insight, and they can hear but not understand. Otherwise, they might turn their lives around and be forgiven.

“Don’t you understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? The farmer scatters the word. This is the meaning of the seed that fell on the path: When the word is scattered and people hear it, right away Satan comes and steals the word that was planted in them. Here’s the meaning of the seed that fell on rocky ground: When people hear the word, they immediately receive it joyfully. Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. Others are like the seed scattered among the thorny plants. These are the ones who have heard the word; but the worries of this life, the false appeal of wealth, and the desire for more things break in and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. The seed scattered on good soil are those who hear the word and embrace it. They bear fruit, in one case a yield of thirty to one, in another case sixty to one, and in another case one hundred to one.”

Jesus said to them, “Does anyone bring in a lamp in order to put it under a basket or a bed? Shouldn’t it be placed on a lampstand? Everything hidden will be revealed, and everything secret will come out into the open. Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!”

He said to them, “Listen carefully! God will evaluate you with the same standard you use to evaluate others. Indeed, you will receive even more. Those who have will receive more, but as for those who don’t have, even what they don’t have will be taken away from them.”

Then Jesus said, “This is what God’s kingdom is like. It’s as though someone scatters seed on the ground, then sleeps and wakes night and day. The seed sprouts and grows, but the farmer doesn’t know how. The earth produces crops all by itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full head of grain. Whenever the crop is ready, the farmer goes out to cut the grain because it’s harvest time.”

He continued, “What’s a good image for God’s kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it? Consider a mustard seed. When scattered on the ground, it’s the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; but when it’s planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all vegetable plants. It produces such large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest in its shade.”

With many such parables he continued to give them the word, as much as they were able to hear. He spoke to them only in parables, then explained everything to his disciples when he was alone with them. (CEB)

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

**Engaging with the Story**

**Parables in Mark (Mark 4:1-34)**

One of my roles serving the wider church is on the Mission Committee of our Eastern Synod. This is the committee that gets to distribute grants to congregations for mission projects. Twice a year we meet to review applications and determine how best to fund mission projects across our synod, and once a year we get to go and visit some of the congregations that have received funding – to see these mission projects in action. This past October we visited a congregation to experience their “Bowls and Blessings” ministry.

This project began in 2020 as one woman’s Advent practice. She saw a need in their community for food support and for connection in those early days of the pandemic, and just decided that she would serve soup to their neighbours every day in Advent. And they just didn’t stop – although now as a twice weekly offering instead of daily.

The day we were there, I’ll be honest, it all felt a little chaotic – and we of course knew we were in the way. They wanted to show us the best of this ministry, while also having to actually get everything ready to serve for noon with just a couple of volunteers. But by noon a table was set out front on the sidewalks, two big pots of steaming hot soup were brought out, along with bread donated from a local bakery, and people began coming by, most bringing their own containers, to get some soup and some conversation.

It all felt a little haphazard and thrown together (from an outsider perspective), but as we watched people come by, we got glimpses of the seeds that had taken root. Of the relationships that had been developed. Of the needs being met. Not in large numbers, but still meeting a real need in their neighbourhood.

Serving on the mission committee we get to see all kinds of projects. Large projects with big budgets, and small projects on shoestring budgets. Some are developed after in-depth research and community consultation, and some just come about because one person had an idea, some passion, the courage to try, and a heart for mission.

Which is why I can’t help but be reminded of the Bowls and Blessings ministry when I hear the parable of the sower who sows his seeds with abandon. The sower who doesn’t seem to care so much where the seeds land, but just that the seeds are thrown out there.

Because let’s just be clear – this is not how you are supposed to plant a garden or a crop. This is not a sensible farming strategy. Seeds are a valuable input – you don’t want ¾ of them not producing because they didn’t end up in the field. Which is why we plant seeds at a particular depth and distance apart, so we can get the best yield from those seeds.

But what if those losses were offset because the few seeds that do land in good soil produce abundantly more than you could ever expect or imagine? Because this is what Jesus tells us happens when this sower sows seeds. The majority won’t ever take root, but those that do produce an overabundance, more than making up for any loss.

In this longest teaching section in Mark’s gospel, Jesus speaks in parables to teach the people what God’s kingdom is like. Three stories about seeds and plants and growth; and one about light thrown in for good measure. These parables don’t necessarily all work neatly together, but taken as a whole, have a lot to teach us about the way of life Jesus was ushering in.

This is a good time to remember again that parables aren’t simple stories with clear meanings. Parables are meant to get us thinking and asking questions. They’re meant to engage us in exploring and wrestling with big ideas.

The man who scatters seeds and then leaves them do to their thing; who doesn’t even understand how they grow. His story gets us thinking about how much of God’s workings are a mystery to us. And about how much is really not in our control.

The tiny mustard seed that grows into a great shrub, where birds can land and make their home. Is this what the person who planted the mustard seed intended? To make a home for birds, or were they just hoping to harvest some mustard? This story gets me thinking that perhaps in God’s kingdom, the seeds we plant sometimes yield unexpected results. And that maybe that’s exactly what needs to happen.

What about the light. Who would put a light under a basket or under a bed? Unless you’re looking for something under the bed? But we don’t want to be the basket or the bed that blocks the light of Christ from shining upon those who need it.

And the sower who sows his seeds with abandon. In this parable I hear a challenge to our economy of time and process. A challenge to our desire for control; our desire for measurable impact. It’s a parable that speaks about abundant growth, a word that came up at our congregational workshop in December as something we desire – to grow. But what kind of growth are we hoping for: in numbers? In faith? In lives changed?

So many more questions than answers, but that’s okay. Because did you notice what the one thing is that Jesus says again and again in this text? “Listen! Let anyone with ears to hear, listen!” Four times in this text, Jesus tells us to listen. He doesn’t tell us to understand or figure it all out – because perhaps we never fully will. Instead, Jesus tells us to be persistent in keeping our ears open. To look; to listen; to pay attention; because God is still speaking to us.

We are currently engaged in a process of intentional listening through our partnership with Trinity Centres Foundation. They are helping us listen to ourselves – to remember (or perhaps discover) who we are and what we want to be about. They will be helping us listen to our neighbours and to our land and building, so we can try and figure out what God is saying to us in this time and place. So we can figure out how we might embody Jesus’ kingdom way here in our neighbourhood.

Right now we are in a time of listening, but there will come a time in the near future when we will have to move from listening to action. We will have to try something even though we might not feel like we have all the information we need or want. There will be a moment (or moments) when we’ll have to step out in faith and simply trust that some of the seeds we sow will land in good soil.

When our mission committee meets with congregations who’ve received mission grant funding, one of the questions we ask is what advice they have for other congregations? At our visit to the Bowls and Blessings ministry this fall, the organizer’s answer was simple. She said: if you have an idea, just try it!

May the Spirit give us the passion, the courage, the heart to do just that. To listen and also to act. Knowing that whatever seeds do take root, will produce more abundantly than we could ever ask or imagine. AMEN.

**Hymn of the Day: ACS # 975 ‘O God, Whose Word Well-Planted’**

1 O God, whose word well-planted

 yields fruit a hundredfold,

 we praise your graces granted

 to those who sowed of old,

 who by their witness scattered

 good seed upon the soil

 where others, reaping, gathered

 the harvest of their toil.

2 O God of seed and harvest,

 of sun and soil and rain,

 attend the word we sow,

 lest its planting be in vain.

 Send showers of your Spirit,

 bright sunshine of your grace,

 that multitudes who hear it

 your gospel may embrace.

3 O God, your final harvest

 of hist'ry's ancient field

 will test with truth the proudest

 that human work can yield.

 Oppression's blight will vanish,

 fair freedom's fruits increase;

 and love and joy will flourish

 *(Title: O God, Whose Word Well-Planted; Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., 1923–2007; Text © 1990 Augsburg Fortress; All rights reserved. Used by permission. Music: Stephen P. Folkemer, b. 1952; Music © 1990 Augsburg Fortress; All rights reserved. Used by permission. Reprinted and Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #A-727610. All rights reserved.)*

**Prayers of Intercession:**

A: As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God’s blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

O God the Master Gardener, we come with both awe and confusion at your ways. We don’t understand how you work. We can’t see the full picture. But we see your kingdom sprouting here and there, and we long for more. Make us ready to play our part, whatever your plans for the next step. God of grace, **C: receive our prayer.**

We see the burden creation bears, and the damage done to it. We pray for the strength of will to work toward healing the earth that it may be a source of life for all. God of grace, **C: receive our prayer.**

We see the people and communities that have been neglected, overlooked, and trampled down, and we pray for the courage to reach out to those the world deems unworthy, that they may know themselves beloved. Be with all who are in need this day of your gifts of healing and wholeness. Especially we pray for Linda, Jeff, Carol, each beloved child on our prayer list, and those we name before you now… God of grace, **C: receive our prayer.**

We see the unintended consequences, both good and bad, of choices made generations ago, and we pray for the wisdom to make decisions with your future in mind, that those who come after us may enjoy gifts we cannot yet imagine. God of grace, **C: receive our prayer.**

We see the difference between your kingdom values and the priorities of our economic and political systems, and we pray for the discernment to recognize and act accordingly, that we may live as your Body on earth, reflecting your will as it is in heaven. God of grace, **C: receive our prayer.**

May your seeds take root this day,

and grow in us to bear more seed that we can scatter far and wide,

that your harvest may multiply in the most surprising of ways.

Give us light enough to take the next step,

confidence enough to share your good news,

and love enough to see you at work in every place and people.

We ask in the name of your Word incarnate, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

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**Share the peace of Christ:**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

**Offering**

**Offering Hymn: ELW # 692 ‘We Are an Offering’**

**Chorus 1**

We lift our voices

We lift our hands

We lift our lives up to You

We are an offering

Lord use our voices

Lord use our hands

Lord use our lives they are Yours

We are an offering

**Bridge**

All that we have

All that we are

All that we hope to be

We give to You

We give to You

**Chorus 2**

We lift our voices

We lift our hands

We lift our lives up to You

We are an offering

We are an offering

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**Offering Prayer:**

Blessed are you, Holy One,

for all good things come from you.

In bread and cup you open heaven to us.

Meet us at this table,

that we receive what we seek

and follow your Son, Jesus,

in whose name we pray.

**Amen.\***

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You are invited to prepare your table with bread and wine, or crackers and juice, whatever is available to you, so that you may participate in the meal.

**Meal: Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:**

[**https://youtu.be/ViXmTzRsfU4**](https://youtu.be/ViXmTzRsfU4)

**Great Thanksgiving: ACS Setting 12: ‘Dialogue…’ (page 36) (spoken)**

The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **C: It is right to give our thanks and praise**

**ELW Setting 12: ‘Preface…’ *(Epiphany)***

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,

that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,

through our Savior Jesus Christ.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;

in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;

and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,

with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**ELW Setting 12: ‘Holy, Holy, Holy…’ *(page 36 )***

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,**

**God of pow’r and God of might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

**Hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**\*

**Thanksgiving at the Table:**

On the night before he showed us the full extent of his love,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer:**

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.**

**Invitation to Communion:**

This is Christ’s table where all are fed and none go hungry. Come, taste, and see that the Lord is good.

I invite those at home, and those in the building communing by fellowship cup, to take your bread or cracker as we say together, “The body of Christ, given for us.”

And, as we take our cup we say, “The blood of Christ, shed for us.”

**Communion Music: ELW Setting 12: ‘Be Known to Us’ *(page 40) &***

 **ELW # 379 ‘Now the Green Blade Rises’**

**ELW Setting 12: ‘Be Known to Us’ *(page 40 )***

**Be known to us, Lord Jesus, in the breaking of the bread.**

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

**Be known to us, Lord Jesus, in the breaking of the bread.**

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

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**ELW # 379 ‘Now the Green Blade Rises’**

1 Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,

 wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;

 love lives again, that with the dead has been;

 love is come again like wheat arising green.

2 In the grave they laid him, love by hatred slain,

 thinking that he would never wake again;

 laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen;

 love is come again like wheat arising green.

3 Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,

 he that for three days in the grave had lain;

 raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen;

 love is come again like wheat arising green.

4 When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,

 your touch can call us back to life again,

 fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;

 love is come again like wheat arising green.

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P: May the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen you, and keep you, in his grace.

***C: Amen.***

**Prayer after Communion:**

A: Giver of every gift,

Christ’s body is our food, and we are Christ’s body.

Raise us to life by your power

for the benefit of all and to your glory,

now and forever.

Amen.\*

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**Blessing:**

Fed and nourished,

go out from this place and scatter the good news far and wide,

letting God handle the mystery of growth from there.

And may the blessing of God who names you,

Christ who claims you,

and the Holy Spirit who dwells in you,

☩ be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.\*

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**Sending Hymn: ELW # 550 ‘On What Has Now Been Sown’**

1 On what has now been sown

 your blessing, Lord, bestow;

 the pow'r is yours alone

 to make it sprout and grow.

 O Lord, in grace the harvest raise,

 and yours alone shall be the praise!

2 To you our wants are known,

 from you are all our pow'rs;

 accept what is your own

 and pardon what is ours.

 Our praises, Lord, and prayers receive

 and to your word a blessing give.

3 Oh, grant that each of us,

 now met before you here,

 may meet together thus

 when you and yours appear,

 and follow you to heav'n, our home.

 E'en so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!

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**Dismissal:**

P: We are disciples

Alive in the adventure of Jesus

A: Let us go forth in joy and peace, to love and serve God and our neighbours.

***C: Thanks be to God.\****

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