

# ***Stephen: The First Christian Martyr***

The Church Militant



The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 7, 2023



## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF VESTAVIA HILLS

201 So. Montgomery Highway Birmingham, Alabama 35216  
Church office: 205-823-1883 PreSchool/MDO: 205-791-5200  
Web Site: [www.vestavialutheran.org](http://www.vestavialutheran.org)  
WORSHIP: 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. Sundays  
SUNDAY SCHOOL: 9:15 a.m.  
Church Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday



PASTOR: The Reverend Michael D. Ahlemeyer – [pastor@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:pastor@vestavialutheran.org) text: 205-201-8866  
PASTOR EMERITUS: The Reverend Clifford Hellmers – [vestluth@juno.com](mailto:vestluth@juno.com) 205-422-4951  
VICAR: Andrew Frerichs – [vicar@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:vicar@vestavialutheran.org)  
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY: Ruth Johnson – [ruthinbham@gmail.com](mailto:ruthinbham@gmail.com)  
DIRECTOR OF MOTHER'S DAY OUT: Brooke Heisler – [bheisler@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:bheisler@vestavialutheran.org)  
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR: Leigh Walter – [lwalter@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:lwalter@vestavialutheran.org)  
CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR ASSISTANT: Amy Alvis - [aalvis@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:aalvis@vestavialutheran.org)  
BOOK KEEPER: Melanie Goodson - [bookkeeper@vestavialutheran.org](mailto:bookkeeper@vestavialutheran.org)  
ADOPTED MEDICAL MISSIONARIES - Arianna and David Shirk, Madeline & Annabelle - [shirkdavid@gmail.com](mailto:shirkdavid@gmail.com)



TO OUR GUESTS: We offer you a warm welcome in the name of Jesus. Please sign the Friendship Register. If you do not have a church home, we would be delighted to have you become a part of our church family. Please feel free to speak with the Pastor about membership in our congregation. If you do have a church home, we pray that God will bless you as you continue your growth in faith and love.



SUNDAY SCHOOL Adult Bible Classes meets in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall at 9:15 a.m. Children, Confirmation, and Youth classes also meet at 9:15 a.m. in the class rooms downstairs.



CHILDREN'S CHURCH and NURSERY Following the Children's Message, all children ages 3-7 are invited to Children's Church downstairs. They will return to the sanctuary after the sermon. A nursery attendant is provided for children ages birth to 3 years during our 8:00 AM and 10:30 AM services.



COMMUNION We invite all baptized Christians who acknowledge their sinfulness, trust in Christ as their Savior, and who recognize the real presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the bread and wine to join us at the Communion table. The practice of our congregation is to place the bread into the extended hand of the communicant. The wine is offered in individual cups; please take one from the tray as it is offered by the Elder. The common cup will be offered to those who do not take an individual cup. The cups in the center of the tray are filled with non-alcoholic wine, in consideration of persons who should not drink wine. Also, children who have not received Communion instruction are invited to come to the Communion rail, fold their hands and receive a blessing.

# The Lutheran Church of Vestavia Hills

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 7, 2023

## PRELUDE

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## OPENING HYMN

"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"

LSB #660 (v. 1-2,4)



1 Stand up, stand up for Je - sus, Ye sol - diers of the cross.  
2 Stand up, stand up for Je - sus; The trum - pet call o - bey;  
4 Stand up, stand up for Je - sus; The strife will not be long;



Lift high His roy - al ban - ner; It must not suf - fer loss.  
Stand forth in might - y con - flict In this His glo - rious day.  
This day the din of bat - tle, The next the vic - tor's song.



From vic - t'ry un - to vic - t'ry His ar - my He shall lead  
Let all His faith - ful serve Him A - gainst un - num - bered foes;  
The sol - diers, o - ver - com - ing, Their crown of life shall see



Till ev - 'ry foe is van - quished, And Christ is Lord in - deed.  
Let cour - age rise with dan - ger And strength to strength op - pose.  
And with the King of Glo - ry Shall reign e - ter - nal - ly.

## INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

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

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,  
**and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

O almighty God, merciful Father,  
**I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe on His name He gives power to become the children of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Grant this, Lord, unto us all.

**Amen.**

## RESPONSE

*~select verses from Psalm 146*

I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

**I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.**

who executes justice for the oppressed,

**who gives food to the hungry.**

**The LORD sets the prisoners free;**

the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

**The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

**the LORD loves the righteous.**

The LORD watches over the sojourners;

he upholds the widow and the fatherless,

**but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.**

The LORD will reign forever,

**your God, O Zion, to all generations.**

**Praise the LORD!**

## GLORIA PATRI



**G**lo - ry be to the Fa - ther and to the Son and to the Ho - ly Ghost;



as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and ev - er shall be, world with - out end. A - men.

## KYRIE



**C** Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -

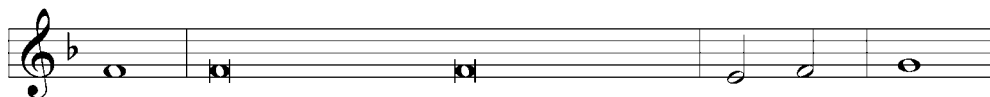


on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

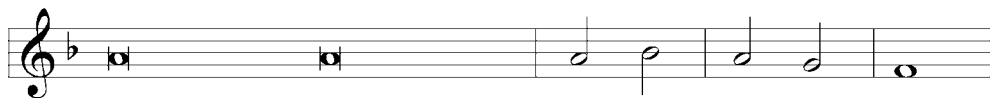
## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS



**P** Glory be to God on high: **C** and on earth peace, good - will toward



men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we wor - ship Thee,



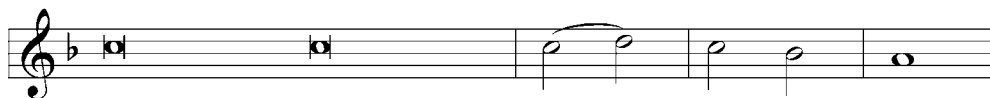
we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory.



O Lord God, heav'n - ly King, God the Fa - ther Al - mighty.



O Lord, the only begotten Son, Je - sus Christ;



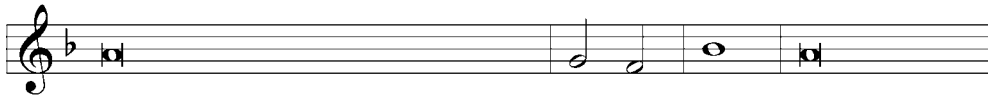
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,



that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy up - on us.



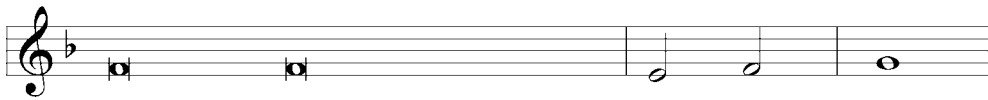
Thou that takest away the sin of the world, re-ceive our prayer.



Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy up-



on us. For Thou only art holy; Thou on-ly art the Lord.



Thou only, O Christ, with the Ho - ly Ghost,



art most high in the glory of God the Father. A - men.

## SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.



And with thy spir - it.

Almighty God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Help us to be faithful to Him to death and to receive life eternal. He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



A - men.

*(Stoning of Stephen, First Christian Martyr)*

<sup>1</sup>Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. <sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. <sup>2</sup>And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me." <sup>51</sup>"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup>Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, <sup>53</sup>you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." <sup>54</sup>Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup>But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."



<sup>57</sup>But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup>Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup>And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**CHORAL ANTHEM (10:30 a.m.)**

K. Medema

*"Enter the Joy"*

*Once in the night we wandered, strangers and aliens, far from our home.  
Searching the streets and highways, waiting for help and deliv'rance to come.  
Walking like children lost and alone, looking for hope when all hope was gone.  
Locked in the terror of the unknown, then came the Easter dawn.*

*Refrain:*

*Enter the joy! Out of the darkness into the day. Enter the joy!  
Life is the promise and Christ is the way. Darkness gives way to bright morning light.  
We are no longer children of night. Enter the joy! And be not afraid.*

*Once we were frightened strangers, locked by our guilt and bound by our past.  
Now love is born among us, setting us free for friendship at last.  
Woven together many, yet one, bound by the spirit leading us on.  
Still to discover what we can be since Christ has set us free.*

*Refrain*

*This is the task before us: living the joy and freedom we claim.  
Facing the pow'rs of darkness, 'til they shall bow to Jesus' name.  
Humbly we'll walk with Christ as our light; caring for all who cry in the night.  
Following Jesus, no matter the loss, learning the way of the Cross.*

*Refrain*

*(Put on the Armor of God)*

<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup>Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup>and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup>In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup>and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

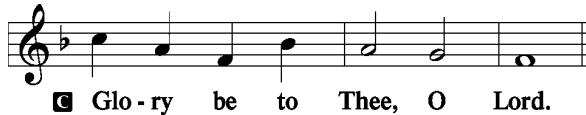
**ALLELUIA VERSE**



Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia. Al-le - lu - ia.

*(I Am in the Father, and the Father Is in Me)*

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fourteenth chapter.



<sup>1</sup>[Jesus said:] "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

<sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

<sup>4</sup>And you know the way to where I am going." <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup>Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

<sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



## **APOSTLES' CREED**

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

**And 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence 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.**

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

# HYMN OF THE DAY

"Onward, Christian Soldiers"

LSB #662 (v. 1,3-4)



1 On - ward, Chris - tian sol - diers, March - ing as to war,  
3 Crowns and thrones may per - ish, King - doms rise and wane,  
4 On - ward, then, ye faith - ful, Join our hap - py throng,



With the cross of Je - sus Go - ing on be - fore.  
But the Church of Je - sus Con - stant will re - main.  
Blend with ours your voic - es In the tri - umph song:



Christ, the roy - al mas - ter, Leads a - gainst the foe;  
Gates of hell can nev - er 'Gainst that Church pre - vail;  
Glo - ry, laud, and hon - or Un - to Christ, the king;



For - ward in - to bat - tle See His ban - ners go!  
We have Christ's own prom - ise, And that can - not fail.  
This through count - less a - ges Men and an - gels sing.



On - ward, Chris - tian sol - diers, March - ing as to war,



With the cross of Je - sus Go - ing on be - fore.

## SERMON

"Stephen: Killed in Action"

**Acts 7:59**

Rev. Michael D. Ahlemeyer

## OFFERING

*~please sign the Record of Fellowship during the Offering*

## VOLUNTARY

## OFFERTORY



**C** Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -  
new a right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a -  
way from Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it  
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -  
tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

## 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.**

## SANCTUS



**Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;**



**heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,**



**ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,**



**bless - ed is He, bless - ed is He that com - eth in the name of the Lord.**



**Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

## PEACE OF THE LORD

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody consists of a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a half note D5, and a whole note E5. A square box containing the letter 'G' is positioned below the first note. The lyrics 'A - men.' are written below the notes.

## AGNUS DEI

A musical staff in G major and 4/4 time. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. A square box containing the letter 'G' is positioned below the first note. The lyrics 'O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the' are written below the notes.

A musical staff in G major and 4/4 time. The melody continues with quarter notes D5, C5, B4, A4, G4, and a quarter rest. The lyrics 'world, have mer-cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that' are written below the notes.

A musical staff in G major and 4/4 time. The melody continues with quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, followed by a quarter rest. The lyrics 'tak-est a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy up - on us.' are written below the notes.

A musical staff in G major and 4/4 time. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The lyrics 'O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the' are written below the notes.

A musical staff in G major and 4/4 time. The melody continues with quarter notes D5, C5, B4, A4, and a half note G4. The lyrics 'world, grant us Thy peace. A - men.' are written below the notes.

*~Please be seated for the Distribution~*



## DISTRIBUTION

### DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

#### "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

LSB #657



1 A might - y for - tress is our God, A sword and shield vic -  
2 No strength of ours can match his might. We would be lost, re -  
3 Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land All threat'ning to de -  
4 God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide, No thanks to foes, who



to - rious; He breaks the cruel op - pres - sor's rod And wins sal -  
ject - ed. But now a cham - pion comes to fight, Whom God Him -  
vour us, We trem - ble not, un - moved we stand; They can - not  
fear it; For God Him - self fights by our side With weap - ons



va - tion glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe Has sworn to  
self e - lect - ed. You ask who this may be? The Lord of  
o - ver - pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage; In bat - tle  
of the Spir - it. Were they to take our house, Goods, hon - or,



work us woe. With craft and dread - ful might He  
hosts is He, Christ Je - sus, might - y Lord, God's  
we'll en - gage. His might is doomed to fail; God's  
child, or spouse, Though life be wrenched a - way, They



arms him - self to fight. On earth he has no e - qual.  
on - ly Son, a - dored. He holds the field vic - to - rious.  
judg - ment must pre - vail! One lit - tle word sub - dues him.  
can - not win the day. The King - dom's ours for - ev - er!

*Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring. Love, drowned in death, shall never die.*

*Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant years in Palestine,  
But saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.*

*In every insult, rift, and war, where color, scorn, or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, where even hope has died.*

*Women and men, in age and youth, can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
And find the way, the life, the truth, revealed in Jesus, freed for all.*

*Christ is alive and comes to bring good news to this and every age;  
Till earth and sky and ocean ring with joy, with justice, love, and praise.*

"Lord of Our Life"

LSB #659



1 Lord of our life and God of our sal - va - tion, Star of our  
2 See round Your ark the hun - gry bil - lows curl - ing; See how Your  
3 Lord, be our light when world - ly dark - ness veils us; Lord, be our  
4 Peace in our hearts, where sin - ful thoughts are rag - ing, Peace in Your



night and hope of ev - 'ry na - tion: Hear and re - ceive Your  
foes their ban - ners are un - furl - ing And with great spite their  
shield when earth - ly ar - mor fails us; And in the day when  
Church, our trou - bled souls as - suag - ing, Peace when the world its



Church's sup - pli - ca - tion, Lord God Al - might - y.  
fi - ery darts are hurl - ing, O Lord, pre - serve us.  
hell it - self as - sails us, Grant us Your peace, Lord:  
end - less war is wag - ing, Peace in Your heav - en.

"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word"

LSB #655



1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in Your Word; Curb those who  
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, Your pow'r make known, For You are  
3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, Send peace and



by de - ceit or sword Would wrest the king - dom from Your  
Lord of lords a - lone; De - fend Your ho - ly Church that  
u - ni - ty on earth; Sup - port us in our fi - nal



Son And bring to naught all He has done.  
we May sing Your praise e - ter - nal - ly.  
strife And lead us out of death to life.

**POST-COMMUNION THANKSGIVING**

Let us pray,

Blessed Savior, Jesus Christ, You have given Yourself to us in this holy Sacrament. Keep us in Your faith and favor that we may live in You even as You live in us. May Your body and blood preserve us in the true faith to life everlasting. Hear us for the sake of Your name.

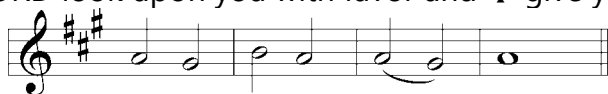
**Amen.**

**BENEDICTION**

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you;

The LORD look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.



■ A - men, a - men, a - men.

## CLOSING HYMN

"Fight the Good Fight"

LSB #664



1 Fight the good fight with all your might; Christ is your  
2 Run the straight race through God's good grace; Lift up your  
3 Cast care a - side, lean on your guide; His bound - less  
4 Faint not nor fear, His arms are near; He chang - es



strength, and Christ your right. Lay hold on life, and  
eyes, and seek His face. Life with its way be -  
mer - cy will pro - vide. Trust, and en - dur - ing  
not who holds you dear; On - ly be - lieve, and



it shall be Your joy and crown e - ter - nal - ly.  
fore us lies; Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.  
faith shall prove Christ is your life and Christ your love.  
you will see That Christ is all e - ter - nal - ly.

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace! Serve the Lord!

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE