

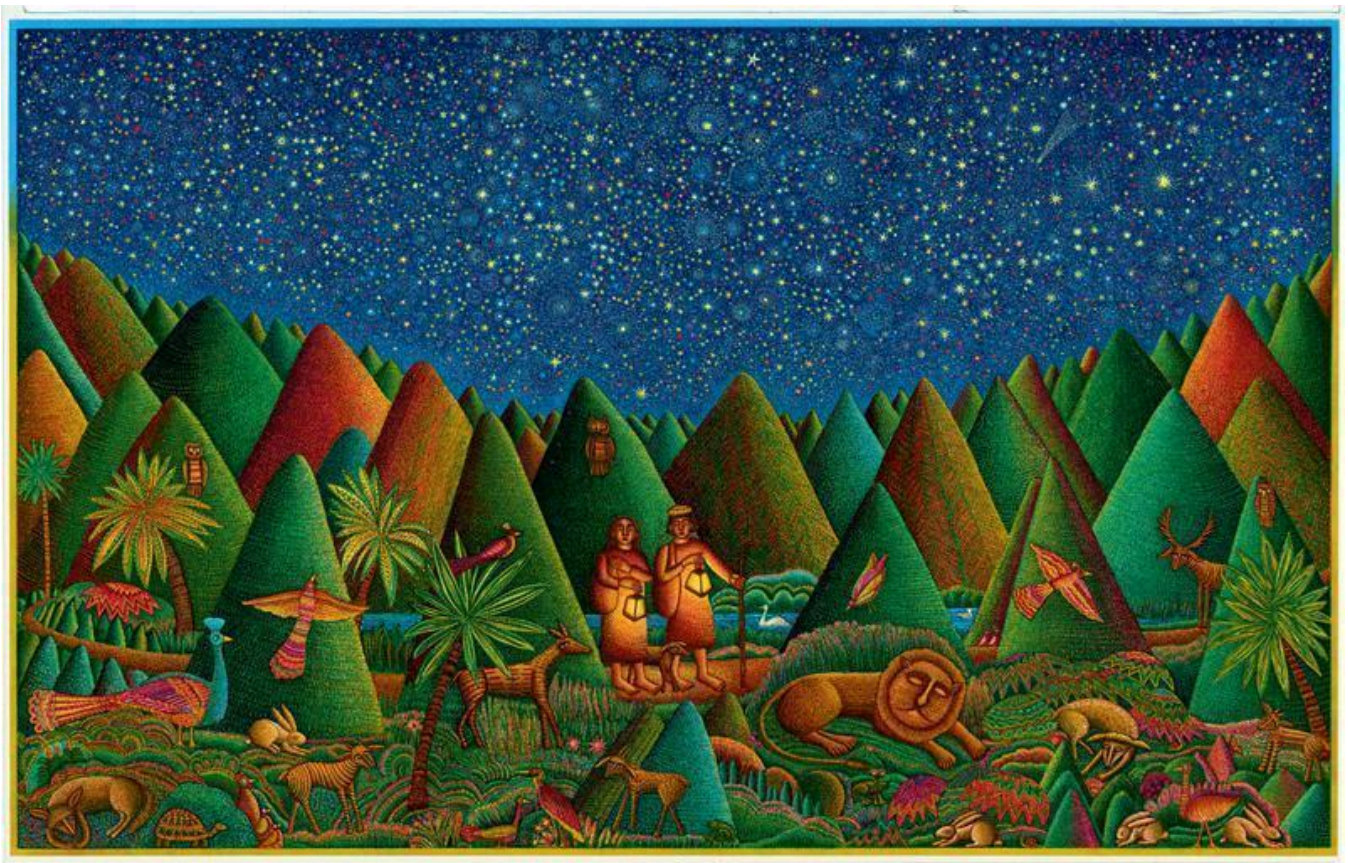
SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND FAREWELL

April 24 & 27, 2024



*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.”*

*-Psalm 23:6*



“Psalm 23,” by artist John August Swanson (1938-2021)

# *Gathering as the Body of Christ*

CENTERING SONG

GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS (v.1 & 2)

NCH 423

GREETING

PRESIDER

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

SM: Our world is ever changing. The same is true for this seminary community.

**A: Students have come and students have graduated and moved on in ministry and witness, being transformed by their experiences here in this place through God's presence, through other students and beloved faculty.**

SM: It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of beginnings and endings. To celebrate what has been and what might be in store.

**A: Today we celebrate God's gifts to us of Dr. Julia O'Brien and Dr. Anne Thayer. We offer thanks for their gifts of love and labor as faculty of Lancaster Theological Seminary.**

SM: God's great faithfulness has been shown in their devotion to every student who has crossed the threshold of this place.

**A: We are grateful for the tremendous and everlasting impact the intersection of our lives have had with theirs. Let us unite our hearts and minds in thanksgiving to God, whom we worship together.**

**\*OPENING HYMN**

**"GOD OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH"**

**NCH 20**

**\*CONFESSION & WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

[All are invited to turn toward the Baptismal Font.]

Presider: God, whose presence is always with us, hear us as we bring to you the confessions of our hearts and minds.

**All: We acknowledge the times when we have disregarded the light of your presence in others and have blown a breath of contempt toward them, either intended or through carelessness, which threatened to snuff out their worth and value. We admit that we sometimes take for granted the beauty and resources of your awesome creation, treating it instead like our own selfish commodity.**

**For the times when we wander from you and take for granted the love that you lavishly pour out upon us, we are sorry.**

(time of silent confession)

Presider: Friends, as we have come before God confessing, know that God has forgiven us, offering to fill us with peace, turning our griefs into shouts of joy. Let us accept God's forgiveness and rest in the assurance of God's restoration.

**\*SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

You are invited to pass the peace to each other in a way comfortable to you and your neighbor.

Peace be with you!      **And also with you!**  
Let us share this peace with one another.

**RECOGNITION OF RETIREMENT**

Presider: Dr. Thayer and Dr. O'Brien, you have been called to Lancaster Theological Seminary, to serve and minister to students seeking a vocation in church or church-related ministries. In your years of dedicated and passionate service, you brought the wisdom of biblical scholarship, the traditions and practices of Christian church history, the creativity and fullness of the arts in Christian worship and work, and the guidance for spiritual practices provided by our ancestors in the faith. All of these you have done with excellence and extraordinary care.

**All: We thank God for you and your most faithful response to the calling of scholar and educator in this community of students. We have been blessed by your skills and gifts while under your leadership, and have grown in knowledge, being challenged and exhorted toward transformation.**

St Minister: Dr. O'Brien, from you the treasures of the Bible were unfolded in ways we had not considered fully before. The world behind the text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text were carefully explored, deepening our understanding of a people who encountered God, were called by God again and again, and who sought to discern God's presence, direction and calling on their lives.

Reader: You taught us interpretation skills, pointed us to resources to help us in that regard, and encouraged us to peel apart layers of structural analysis, source and redaction criticism, and comparisons between translations.

We learned how our own social locations were lenses through which we read and understood scripture and how to hear the voices of those outside of our own context to bring a more rich hermeneutic to our work in ministry.

St Minister: Through Christianity & the Arts, you taught us not only how to appreciate art, but to see the assumptions, gifts and biases therein. You inspired us by drawing out our creativity, encouraging us to grasp at wonder and awe to help bring a different spark of life to worship and other contextual ministries.

Reader: From you, we learned to see and listen closely to the marginalized and unnamed in scripture and to not only consider, but attempt to amplify their voices, giving them a chance to be seen and heard, their stories helping clarify our own and those around us.

Presider: Dr. Thayer, with you, students traveled millennia back to their Christian roots, tracing the steps and missteps of our ancient kin as they worked to compose how Christian faith is lived and practiced. You helped students hear the voices of bishops, councils, martyrs, monks, nuns, mystics, ascetics, reformers, preachers, and layfolk. You helped students to see their struggles of these forebears as they worked to make sense of faith and develop doctrine on which they could stand firm, with hopes of helping others do the same.

St Minister: We learned how the church at times became an oppressor, enforcing belief through violence, and at other times, through peaceful disagreement and separation. Our hope is now to learn from each other's faith perspective and become holy peacemakers, not creators of division. At every turn, you helped us bridge the ancient with the contemporary, helping us to see parallels between church history and tradition and our modern-day religious events and controversies. In that sense, there is nothing new under the sun, but different ways of wrestling with faith and what it means to practice it well.

Reader: Using the writings and wisdom of our ancestor seekers of God, you helped us follow in their spiritual footsteps, trying on their practices like cloaks of mystery, both enshrouding and revealing pathways of communion with God. We journaled together, prayed together in many different forms, and walked a labyrinth, weaving together our desires to know and be known by God, leaving each class in wonder that God can meet us in all of our diversities.

**All: Your teaching and guidance live on in our own vocations, they have left an indelible mark of incredible intellectual and creative wonder on our very souls. We recognize the great passion, consideration and care you have poured into your work, speaking your wisdom in many forms, your teaching echoing through the halls of this place from the past and well into the future. And we recognize we have been marked by the Christ-like love and support you have given us as we journeyed with you. You not only taught us through your words, but through your actions, that our lives and our passions mattered to you. And because of that, not only did we learn the subject matter well, we grew in our connections with God, with you, and with each other. We are so very grateful for you, our teachers and our friends. Thank you for the patience you gave us as we wrestled, grew and learned. Thanks be to God for your faithfulness!**

Presider: And so, we come to this day, the last chapel of our 2023-2024 school year, to give you both honor and heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of your retirements from this esteemed seminary. It is a time both bitter and sweet. Your presence and leadership will be greatly missed and yet we do celebrate with you this move toward new directions in your lives. Know that the influence of your faithfulness will not leave us upon your departure. Your work lives on in the lives you have touched here. Let us join together in prayer:

**All: God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. The time we were together in your name saw our learnings and growth, laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments.**

**Guide us as we hold these cherished memories and be with us as we move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other; through Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.**

**HYMN**

**MY SOUL GIVES GLORY TO MY GOD**

**NCH 119**

**OFFERINGS OF GRATITUDE**

President: Dr. Thayer and Dr. O'Brien, as you begin this new chapter of lives, we wished to take this opportunity to express our gratitude and admiration in a personalized way. We would like to bless you with our thoughts, our thanks and gratitude for what you have meant to each of us. Not only has your work been invaluable to our seminary community as a whole, but to individual students, staff, and other faculty. Dr. Thayer and Dr. O'Brien, would you come forward at this time to receive our offerings to you? I invite all who are present to bring your written gifts forward at this time.

*Service of the Word*

**READING**

**EXCERPT FROM "LIFE OF THE BELOVED"**

**HENRI NOUWEN**

Listening to that voice with great inner attentiveness, I hear at my center words that say: "I have called you by name, from the very beginning. You are mine and I am yours. You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests. I have molded you in the depths on the earth and knit you together in your mother's womb. I have carved you in the palms of my hands and hidden you in the shadow of my embrace. I look at you with infinite tenderness and care for you with care more intimate than that of a mother for her child. I have counted every hair on your head and guided you at every step. Wherever you go, I go with you, and wherever you rest, I keep watch. I will give you food that will satisfy all your hunger and drink that will quench all your thirst. I will not hide my face from you. You know me as your own as I know you as my own. You belong to me. I am your father, your mother, your brother, your sister, your lover, and your spouse...yes, even your child...wherever you are I will be. Nothing will ever separate us. We are one."

Great Spirit of all creation, may we lean into your presence as we enter into this space. May you guide our hearts to receive your word written, spoken, and unspoken.

**SCRIPTURE READING**

**PSALM 23**

**NRSV**

Reader A reading from the Book of Psalms - psalm 23.

Reader The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

St. Minister Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

*Reader* Holy wisdom, holy Word. **Thanks be to God!**

**RESPONSES**

**DR. O'BRIEN/DR. THAYER**

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY**

**STUDENT MINISTER**

Divine source of all things. We look forward to the day that your vision of the flourishing of all things on this Earth becomes a reality. While we navigate life together, we see so much pain and suffering. We pause now to audibly share a word or phrase representing the places where your liberating love needs to be made known.

[Time for people to share their prayers]

Your love knows no bounds and doesn't just show up when we feel in the pit of despair, but reverberates in moments of radiant joy. We pause again to share a word or phrase representing the parts of your creation which bring us joy.

[Time for people to share their prayers]

Thank you, Spirit, for your relentless love that finds a way through all things to be with us. Amen.

## Service of the Table

OFFERTORY SONG

INSTRUMENTAL

### \*THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

God is with you!

**And Also with you!**

Open your hearts!

**We open our hearts to God!**

Let us give thanks to God!

**It is right to give our thanks and praise!**

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!

Before all this, you were God.

Outside all we know, you are God.

After all is finished, you will be God.

Archangels sound the trumpets, angels teach us to sing,

Saints pull us into your presence

And this is our song:

**“Santo, Santo, Santo”**

**NCH 793**

**Santo, santo , santo**

**Mi Corazon te adora,**

**Mi Corazon te sabe decir**

**Santo eres Dios**

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three! You beyond the galaxies, you under the oceans, You inside the leaves, you pouring down rain, You opening the flowers, you feeding the insects, You giving us your image, you carrying us through the waters, You holding us in the night; Your smile on Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham, your hand with Moses and Miriam, Your words through Deborah and Isaiah – You lived as Jesus among us, healing teaching, dying, rising, Inviting us all to your feast. And so we pray after him:

**Our Friend, our Mother, 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.**

In the night in which he was betrayed, 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.

Holy God, we remember your Son, His life with the humble, his death among the wretched, His resurrection for us all: Your wisdom our guide, your justice our strength, Your grace our way to rebirth. And so we cry, Mercy:

**Mercy!**

And so we cry, Glory:

**Glory!**

And so we cry, Blessing:

**Blessing!**

Holy God, we beg for your Spirit. Enliven this bread, awaken this body, pour us out for each other. Transfigure our minds, ignite your church, nourish the life of the earth. Make us, while many, united; make us, though broken, whole; Make us, despite death, alive.

And so we cry, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

And so the church shouts, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

And so the whole earth pleads, Come, Holy Spirit:

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three – Our life, our mercy, our might,  
Our table, our food, our server, Our rainbow, our ark, our dove  
Our sovereign, our water, our wine, Our light, our treasure, our tree  
Our way, our truth, our life – You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!

**Praise now, praise tomorrow, praise forever! Amen.**

**INVITATION TO THE TABLE****PRESIDER**

We have a few COVID related options for those who wish to partake. If you wish to receive from the ministers, take an empty cup from the stack on the aisle table and approach the minister, who will place a piece of bread in your open hand. All bread is gluten free. Or you may take one of the sealed celebration cups with the wafer on top and juice beneath; hold them out to the minister for a blessing. A minister will pour grape juice into your cup. Eat, drink, and dispose of the cup in the waste baskets at the side aisles as you return to your seat.

If you are unable to come forward, please signal the ministers, and we will come to you at your seat. Those who prefer not to partake in Communion are invited to a different kind of divine encounter through an interfaith prayer of blessing. If this is your preference, we invite you to meet the minister at the baptismal font.

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at this table where Christ is the host.

**COMMUNION SONG****THE OPEN TABLE (SEE PAGE 12)****MARK MILLER**

*Going Forth as the Body of Christ*

**\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION****PRESIDER**

**Gracious God, thank you for this feast! You lay a table for us in the presence of our enemies; you feed us with the bread of life and quench our thirst with the wine of gladness. You nourish us with your presence and renew our hope in your future. All thanks and praise to you, O God, giver of life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen**

**\*CLOSING SONG****GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS (v.3)****NCH 423****\*BENEDICTION**

May God bless and keep you. May God's face shine upon you. May God be gracious to you. May God's countenance radiate upon you and give you peace. Amen.

**SENDING & POSTLUDE**

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**Cover Art:** Swanson, John August. "Psalm 23," from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56560>.

**Reading:** Nouwen, Henri. *Life of the Beloved*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992, p. 36-37.

**Communion Liturgy:** From Communion Liturgy, adapted from Gail Ramshaw: "Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services

**Prayer after Communion:** David Gambrell, ed., Connections Worship Companion, First Edition, Connections: A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 157–58.

**Final Prayer for Retirees:** adapted from: "Liturgy for Departure of a Pastor from a Congregation," [swmnelca.org](http://swmnelca.org), accessed April 16, 2024, <https://bit.ly/3xzTxp8>.

***\*The worship planning team creates all other parts of the liturgy except where noted.***

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**LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY WORSHIP TEAM**

*Equilla Curry, Chynaah Maryoung-Cooke '21, Patricia Hall, Jack Kasander, Stephanie Oelrich, Cam Richesson '23, Rev. Dr. Kellie Turner '18, and DV Yost.  
Rev. Dr. Catherine E. Williams, Advisor*

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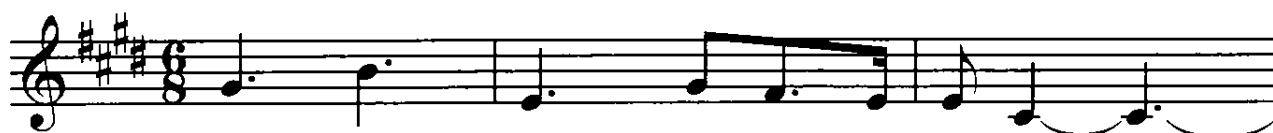
**THE WORSHIP TEAM SEEKS:**

*To serve the universal church of our Creator.*

*To minister to the unique and diverse needs of the seminary community.*

*To foster an expansive culture of worship that values difference and challenges the normative.*

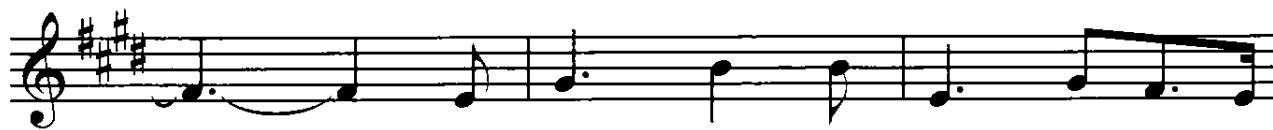
# The Open Table



1. Come, oh come, come to the ta - ble.  
 2. Cir - cle round, let's join to - geth - er.  
 3. God is love; Love is cre - at - ing



— Gath - er 'round, come with - out fear.  
 — Share your joys, and bring your tears.  
 — some - thing new, right here, right now.



— Known by name, here at the  
 — Strength and hope found at the  
 — We're chil - dren of God, here at the



ta - ble, this ta - ble; wel - come  
 ta - ble, this ta - ble;  
 ta - ble, this ta - ble;



here, to the ta - ble of love. love.

From: *Roll Down, Justice!* (CGBK72).

Text: Mark A. Miller.

Music: *The Open Table*, by Mark A. Miller.

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