

MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A faithful, serving community, joyfully sharing Christ's love



Third Sunday in Lent

March 8, 2026

228 Ramapo Valley Rd, Oakland NJ 07436

www.messiahoaklandnj.org | 201-337-4900

@MessiahOaklandNJ

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

The congregation is invited to worship in any way that is comfortable and meaningful such as standing, sitting, kneeling, coloring, etc. You may join in worship by speaking the responses in bold type.

SILENT MEDITATION DURING PRELUDE

WELCOME

GATHERING WORDS

On this Third Sunday in Lent, we journey again toward the cross. We feel the weight of all that lies ahead. We wrestle with coming sorrow. We balance our growing needs. God, we come here today braced for the hazards of this journey.

Instead, you pour out grace.

Instead, you anoint us with oil.

Instead, you fill our cups to overflowing.

We find beauty in dry places, abundance in want,
and welcome in despair.

**You call us to the waters of life, and we respond,
our longings now fulfilled.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism.

We know the pull of all that separates us from God. We long for the cleansing water poured out over us again. We seek anointing, the oil running its healing course. We feel this call to reconnect, so we confess our sins.

God, we have forgotten your call, insistent though it is. We stay back though the waters of baptism call us forward. We separate ourselves though the bread and cup beckon us to community. We hide our wounds though the oil of anointing waits at the ready.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. Yet God does not withhold any good gift from us. Like Naaman at the river, we are surprised at how easy it is to experience God's outpouring of grace. Like the woman at the well, we share living water and watch impenetrable barriers break. Like Mary at the feet of Jesus, we empty ourselves of all we have, only to be filled again. Beloved, you are forgiven. Receive now, for yourself, the abundant grace that opens your soul to love.

May grace flow free through us once again!

GATHERING HYMN Bless Now, O God, the Journey ELW #326



1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
 2 Bless so - journ - ers and pil - grims who share this wind - ing way;
 3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.



the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
 your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus - tains the day.
 We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,



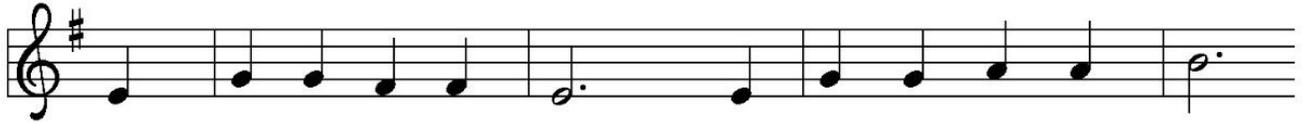
The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun - tain round,
 We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
 but wait - ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.



then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
 to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
 Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**



1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.
 Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.
 Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Searching God, you do not shy away from us, even when we hide ourselves from you. You approach us despite the shame we feel. Notice us once again. Anoint us with your presence and the oil of blessing this day, that we may take our place at your side. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: A Reading from **Exodus 17:1-7**

¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" ³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵ The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶ I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

THE PSALM: Psalm 95 will be read responsively

¹ Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

² **Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³ For you, LORD, are a great God, and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴ **In your hand are the caverns of the earth; the heights of the
hills are also yours.**

⁵ The sea is yours, for you made it,

and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶ **Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

⁷ For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture
and the sheep of God's hand. Oh, that today you would hear
God's voice!

⁸ **"Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on that day at
Massah in the desert.**

⁹ There your ancestors tested me,

they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

¹⁰ **Forty years I loathed that generation, saying,
'The heart of this people goes astray;
they do not know my ways.'**

¹¹ Indeed I swore in my anger, 'They shall never come to my rest.'"

SECOND READING: A Reading from Romans 5:1-11

¹ Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our
Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this
grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the
glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions,
knowing that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance
produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does
not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our
hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the
ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—
though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to
die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners
Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely, therefore, since we have now
been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the

wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have NOW received reconciliation.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Nothing in All Creation

ACS pg.34



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.

**THE GOSPEL: The Holy Gospel according to John 4:5-42
Glory to you, O Lord.**

⁵ [Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."¹⁷ The

woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,'¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.²³ But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what

you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

For All the Faithful Women

ELW #419



- 1 For all the faith-ful wom - en who served in days of old,
- 2 Re - call the out - cast wom - an with whom our Lord con-versed:
- 3 All praise to God the Fa - ther! All praise to Christ the Son!



to you shall thanks be giv - en; to all, their stor - y told.
Christ gave her liv - ing wa - ter to quench her deep - est thirst.
All praise to God the Spir - it, who binds the church as one!



They served with strength and glad - ness in tasks your wis - dom gave.
Like hers, our hearts are yearn - ing; Christ of - fers us his word.
With saints who went be - fore us, with saints who wit - ness still,



To you their lives bore wit - ness, pro-claimed your pow’r to save.
Then may our lips be burn - ing to wit - ness to our Lord.
we sing glad al - le - lu - ias and strive to do your will.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of all things, you pour out your grace upon us through living water, healing oil, and cups running over. We come to you this day asking again for you to give your grace anew. We lift our joys to you and seek your presence among our sorrows.

We pray for creation, for the land, the water, the skies, and the air. We thank you for its beauty and abundance, astonishing each day. I invite you to name out loud or silently moments of abundance you have seen, experienced, or received this week.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for our community, for family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. We thank you for the joy shared between us all. I invite you to name out loud or silently moments of joy and connection you witnessed, received or experienced this week.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

Send your accompanying presence to those who are unable to be among community this week, whether because of travel, illness, or vulnerability. Anoint those who need healing, wholeness, and companionship with your reviving Spirit. I invite you to name out loud or silently those individuals or groups you want to lift up prayers for this day.

We pray especially for those who are ill or injured, those in need of mental health support, those who are seeking recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, those who are lonely, and those who mourn.

God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for the church around the world, doing the slow but persistent work of ministry. We thank you for the grace that we have witnessed pouring out of your church. I invite you to name out loud or silently ministries, programs, and groups working locally, regionally, and around the world. Send your patience and wisdom among us when we try to rush through work that will take time. Encourage us to see our ministry efforts through. Stir our hearts when opportunities arise and remove barriers that discourage and distract us. Help us to prepare and share the feast of your love with all whom we encounter. God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

We pray for the nations and their leaders all throughout the earth. We thank you for bright moments of peacemaking and cooperation. Send your Spirit of justice and peace to those who experience strife and discord, violence and heartbreaking need. Pour out your courage and wisdom on us and on all who serve, that all people may experience love, care, and all that they need. God, in your grace, **tend to our prayers.**

God, we trust in your abundance, whether we sense it or not. Even in days of sorrow or seasons of grief, remind us of your unyielding grace. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, such as a handshake, hug, or peace sign and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

OFFERING

Offering can be left in the plates at the back of the sanctuary, sent to the church office, or given online by using the QR code to the right.



OFFERTORY**Create in Me a Clean Heart**

ELW #186



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 your pres-ence, and take



not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of



your sal - va - tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERING PRAYER

God of grace, you give us all that we have and all that we need. Teach us to recognize your gifts and to share with you all that we have. Though we don't yet know what you have in store for us, we pray that you bring overflowing abundance out of what we offer. Amen.

DIALOGUE

God is with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to our God.

Let us give thanks to God, our saving grace.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and
 God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your
 glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
 Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the
 Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.
 Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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

One loaf, broken yet abundant. One cup, poured out yet more than enough. Come, share in the feast.

COMMUNION

We invite you to commune in whatever way is comfortable to you either from your seat using the prepackaged elements or by coming forward to the altar rail. To commune at the altar rail, please proceed down the diagonal aisles and pick up a cup from the silver plates. You will be given a wafer and then offered wine (first chalice) or grape juice (second chalice). For those communing online, please join us using whatever bread/crackers and wine/grape juice you have at home. All are welcome at God's table.

The body and blood of Christ, given for you. **Amen**

COMMUNION SONG**Lamb of God**

ACS pg.40



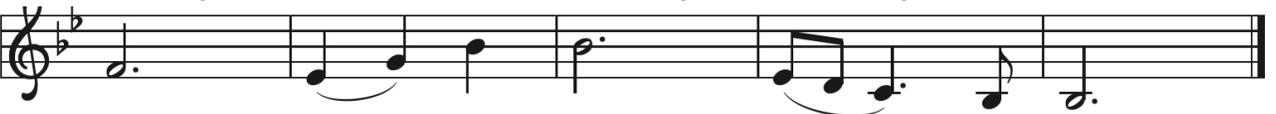
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



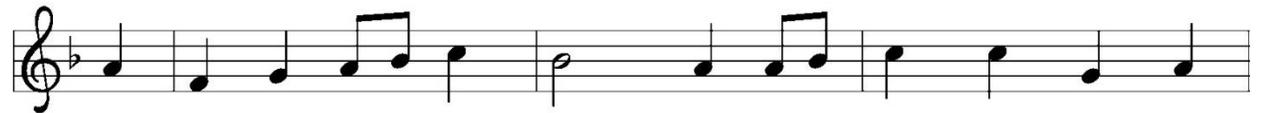
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the



world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN**O Bread of Life From Heaven**

ELW #480



1 O bread of life from heav - en, O food to pil - grims
 2 O fount of grace re - deem - ing, O riv - er ev - er
 3 We love you, Je - sus, ten - der, in all your hid - den



giv - en, O man - na from a - bove: feed
 stream - ing from Je - sus' wound - ed side: come
 splen - dor with - in these means of grace. Oh,



with the bless - ed sweet - ness of your di - vine com -
 now, your love be - stow - ing on thirst - ing souls, and
 let the veil be riv - en, and our clear eye in



plete - ness the souls that want and need your love.
 flow - ing till all are ful - ly sat - is - fied.
 heav - en be - hold your glo - ry face to face.

TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in God's grace. **Amen**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. O Jesus, you have shared a feast more gracious than we could ever ask, the outpouring of your own self with us. Send us out into the world to be conduits for your goodness, channels of your grace, anointing this world with the new life you have given us. Amen.

BLESSING

Beloved, receive now this blessing: Life and life abundant is yours, today. As you leave this place, embrace the transformation you have found here. Like water changed to wine, we can share delight beyond measure. Like new wineskins for new wine, we can stretch and change, new vessels for God's goodness. Like the wine and oil of the Samaritan on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, we can offer blessing, even as we seek healing. God blesses you with abundance. Christ blesses you with grace. The Spirit blesses you with love overflowing. Trust this blessing as you go, and pour yourself out to a world in need. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer

ELW # 618

1 Guide me ev - er, great Re - deem - er, pil - grim through this
2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain where the heal - ing
3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid my anx - ious
bar - ren land. I am weak, but you are might - y; hold me
wa - ters flow; let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar lead me
fears sub - side; death of death and hell's de - struc - tion, land me
with your pow'r - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
all my jour - ney through. Strong de - liv - 'rer, strong de - liv - 'rer,
safe on Ca - naan's side. Songs and prais - es, songs and prais - es
feed me now and ev - er - more, feed me now and ev - er - more.
shield me with your might - y arm, shield me with your might - y arm.
I will raise for - ev - er - more, I will raise for - ev - er - more.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

Go in peace. Believe the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

Please join us today after church for some Mario Kart fun and a special Mario Bros coffee hour!

UPCOMING WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Mid-Week Lenten Worship | 7:30 on Zoom

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 15, 2026 | 10:00am Worship Service

MARCH BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

ELCA World Hunger

THIS WEEK AT MESSIAH

MONDAY: 7:00 pm Book Club on Zoom

TUESDAY: 6:30 pm AA Meeting

WEDNESDAY: 7:30 pm Mid-Week Lenten Worship on Zoom

THURSDAY: 7:30 pm Band practice

SUNDAY: 9:00 am Choir Practice

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Outreach Meeting

TODAY'S MINISTERS

PASTOR: Rev. Courtney Smith
Westerlund

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Bob Luderer

LAY READER: Valerie Nicolosi

USHER: Len Nicolosi

GREETER: Marilyn Rubner

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS: Brigitte
Albrecht & Susanne Herbst

ALTAR GUILD: Marilyn Rubner &
Kristen Rios

VIDEO TECH: Alex Boyce

COUNTERS: Cesar Rios & Brigitte
Albrecht

COORDINATING COUNCILOR:

Valerie Nicolosi

COFFEE HOUR: Linda Axtell

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Music and Worship Meeting: March 16th

Please join us for a worship and music meeting on March 16th at 7:30 pm on Zoom to talk about our music ministry in the congregation.

Thrivent Dinner: March 25th at 6:00 pm at Messiah Lutheran Church.

Learn about Thrivent's *Savvy Tax Strategies* at dinner hosted by Thrivent's Pater Manke, FIC, RICP. Please sign up in the narthex.

Book Club: Tomorrow, March 9th: “The Book of Longings” by Sue Monk Kidd. April 13th: “The Correspondent” by Virginia Evans.

ELCA Good Gifts: March 1st to March 29th, Palm Sunday.

We are working toward donations of animals or items such as bibles and feeding those in need. Last year an amazing \$700 was raised! Any and all donations are welcome. You can find the animals/costs and banks in the Narthex. Please return your barns or envelopes by March 29th.

Outreach Meeting: March 15th following worship, join us for an outreach meeting to plan our service projects for the upcoming year.

Youth and Family Meetings: March 22nd following worship and during Sunday School, we will be doing two special activities as well as discussing activities the youth would like to do. During coffee hour, we invite parents and adults to discuss activities they would like to do in the next few months. Look for updates in the May/June newsletter.

Palm Sunday: We need readers for the Passion on Palm Sunday! If interested, please talk to Pastor Courtney. All ages are welcome!

Worship Assistants Needed!

Please consider helping with worship by serving as a lector or Communion Assistant. Training is available if needed but both responsibilities are easy to pick up and learn. Please talk to Pastor Courtney, Ashley, or sign up on the serving schedule.



**Please keep in prayer the following people in our
Messiah family:** Bob, Helen, Joan B, Jonny & Natalie,
Kim, Len, Mike, and Sue.

And the following friends and family:

All those in the armed forces, especially those connected to our
congregation: Evan and Joseph

Jeff

David

Kurt

Peter & Joyce

Mark and Keith, Susanne's friends

Gayle, friend of Joan & Eleanore

June, Lee's mother

Miro, Vesna's father

Erika, Kristen's sister

Thomas, friend of Tony & Edie

John, Joan, Herb, Todd, Gus, Peggy, Jim, Kathy, and Carol, Ron and
Marilyn's friends

The family and friends of Ethel, Brigitte's sister-in-law

Kim, friend of Sue

Marilyn & Vincent, Lisa's parents

Ron & June, Karen's parents

Melinda & Paul, Eleanore's sister & nephew

Jennifer, friend of Sue & Eleanore

Nancy, friend of Kim

Peggy & Christine, Alex's aunts

Karol & Barbara, Eleanore's friends

Alexa and Hank friends of Nancy

Peter, Terri's father

Julie, family friend of Nancy

Paula, friend of Nancy

Janice, food pantry volunteer

Please let us know if you have changes we should make to our prayer list