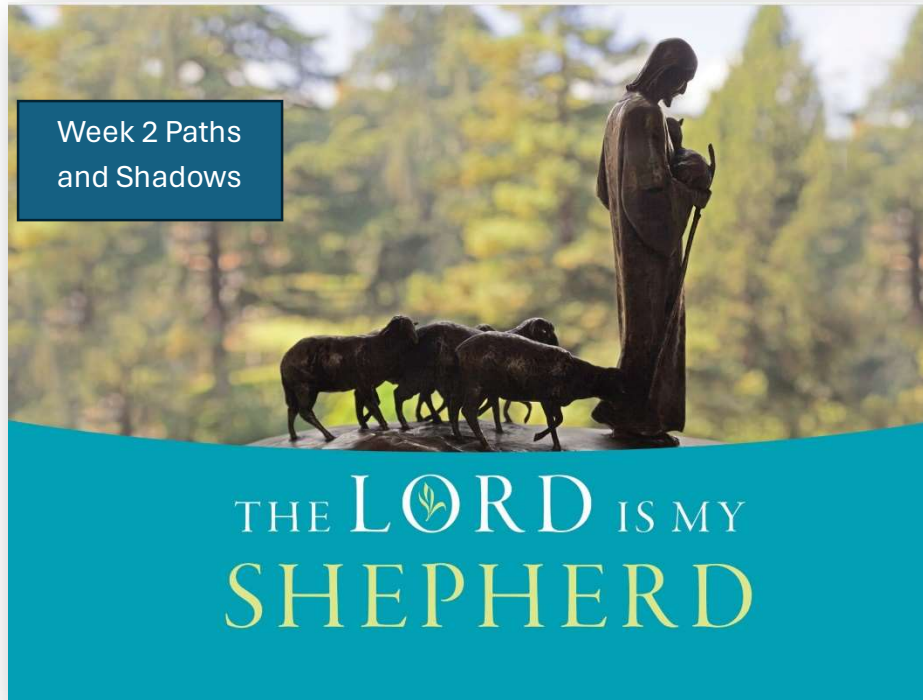


Community Reformed Church

Service

April 21, 2024

Bulletin Sanctuary and Bulletin Ministry



In our worship today, Paths and Shadows, we will learn more about the “paths of righteousness” in which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads us. We will see, too, that he will walk with us even through “the valley of the shadow of death.”¹

Rev. Mark Poyner

Kathy Sandel, Minister of Music

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Greeting and Announcements (Announcements are on last Page)

Prelude: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name R. Wayne Fisher

We Approach God

Invocation and Call to Worship (Responsive Reading)

P In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P The Lord is my shepherd ... He restores my soul.

C Repent ... that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19-20)

P He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

C We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

P Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,

C In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

P For you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

C Jesus said, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

Hymn 1 394 Christ is made the sure foundation

Prayer of Confession: (Unison Reading)

Beloved, let us come to the time where we recognize we fall short in God's expectations. Let us come to God in our prayer of confession.

Almighty God, you lead us in paths of righteousness, but we forsake your will and your ways to follow our own self-centered paths. We struggle in days of trouble, grief and fear, relying on our own strength instead of trusting you. Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Assurance of Pardon

As we are gathered today under the caring watch of our Good Shepherd, let us find comfort and assurance in the timeless words of Psalm 23. As we reflect upon these divine promises, know that our Lord leads us beside still waters and restores our souls. In the grace of God, through our faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the fullness of mercy and forgiveness. Just as the shepherd tends to each sheep, so too does our God look after us, guiding us away from paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even as we walk through the darkest valleys, we fear no evil, for our Lord is with us; His rod and His staff, they comfort us. Therefore, hear this good news: In Christ, our sins are forgiven. Our shepherd has laid down His life for us, and in His resurrection, we too are brought into new life. Rejoice and be glad, for our debt is paid, our spirit renewed, and our place in the

house of the Lord secured forever. Go forth in peace, carrying the love and forgiveness of our Shepherd in your hearts, spreading His peace wherever you may roam. Amen.

Summary of the Law

Dear friends in faith, as we gather today under the guidance of our eternal Shepherd, let us recall the essence of the Law given to us through scripture. In the spirit of Psalm 23, the Lord shepherds us, not only to follow Him in green pastures but also in the ways of righteousness. Our Shepherd commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and to love our neighbors as ourselves. These commandments encapsulate the fullness of the Law and the Prophets, guiding us in the paths of justice, mercy, and humility. As sheep under His watchful care, we are called to heed His voice, to follow where He leads, and to embody His love in every action. Let us embrace these commands wholeheartedly, walking faithfully beside our Shepherd, knowing that His guidance is sure and His provisions plentiful. In loving God and our neighbors, we mirror the care and compassion of our Shepherd, finding tranquility in His presence and strength in His word. Let us hold these truths close to our hearts as we navigate the complexities of life, sustained, and inspired by His divine love. Amen.

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Hymn 2: 690 He Leadeth Me

We Listen to God's Word

Old Testament Reading, Isaiah 53:5-7 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Hebrews 13:20-21, Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading, John 10:17-18 For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.

Choir Anthem

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Ministry Message: (This message will be expanded upon during the Sanctuary Message)

A shepherd leads the sheep into green pastures, finding them safe places to rest and graze. A shepherd will make sure the sheep are near still waters to quench their thirst. But a shepherd does not usually keep his sheep in one place all the time. At the right time, the shepherd calls the sheep by name and leads them out, perhaps to look for new pasture or a better source of fresh water. He walks ahead of them, and they follow him. The sheep trust their shepherd to lead them along safe paths to the best places for rest and grazing.

We are Jesus' sheep, the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand. And, as you well know, not all of us will stay in the same place or remain the same for a lifetime. Jesus our Shepherd may have brought you into his fold through Baptism when you were a tiny lamb, or perhaps you came into his fold as a mature adult sheep. But after coming into the fold of the Savior, you learned his Word and grew in faith, moving through life as the Shepherd has led you. The Lord, who is our Shepherd, leads us through life in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. These are not unfamiliar paths for our Shepherd. He has walked them before.

These paths of righteousness are Jesus' paths, the paths he walked when he lived among us. Scripture speaks about these paths that we follow, walking as our Shepherd walked through a life of love and service to others: "Walk in love, as Christ loved us" (Ephesians 5:2). "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that might you follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). And, of course, sheep don't always walk. Sometimes they run—but they keep their eyes on the Shepherd: "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

As we walk—or run—through life and follow the Shepherd, we are led along his "paths of righteousness." As we follow Jesus, we seek to live according to his Word and will. By his death and resurrection, through faith in his name, we are clothed in his righteousness, his own holiness. Our lives reflect that righteousness as we live in imitation of our Savior. It is that reflection of love and care that others can see in our words and actions: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We walk in these righteous paths, following the Lord's Word and will, "for his name's sake." Our lives of love and service glorify God and bring honor to his holy name.

These righteous paths may lead—and in fact, one day, will lead us—"through the valley of the shadow of death." We may pass through many shadowed valleys of illness, grief and loss, and each of us will pass through the valley of death. Yet we do not need to be afraid of those shadows because we are following the Shepherd, the Lord we trust in life and death. Jesus came to fulfill the Scriptures, to banish death's shadows, to lead people out of darkness into the light, into his light. The evangelist Matthew points to the prophet's words about the promised Messiah: "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16). The shadowed valley cannot harm Jesus

because he has already passed safely through it for our sake. He was betrayed, arrested, and unjustly condemned to death. Jesus was innocent of all sin; it was our sins that he carried in his body to the cross. As the prophet Isaiah said, Jesus “was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.” Our Shepherd went silently and willingly for us. Then, his sacrifice complete, on the third day—the first Easter morning—God “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep.” Jesus rose in triumph over sin, death and the devil, those terrifying enemies that sought to harm his flock. As we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, those terrible enemies are just that—shadows—shadows that may frighten and trouble us but cannot harm us. Our Shepherd is beside us all the way, the rod and staff of his power and his Word ever ready to defend and comfort us.

These are the paths we walk each day. We don’t always know where those paths will lead, and we cannot see what may lie ahead of us, but the Shepherd knows. One day we will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but our Shepherd knows that path too, because he has already been there, and he will bring us safely through. Whatever our path, wherever it goes, we can walk with confidence, trusting our Shepherd to lead us, out of the darkness of sin, out of the shadow of death, into his light and in his righteous paths. For as the psalmist says of the Shepherd, “Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day” (Psalm 139:12). Amen.²

Affirmation of Faith: 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, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

** *holy catholic church stands for the universal church*

** *communion of saints stands for those that believe in Jesus Christ*

We Respond to God’s Word

Offertory Blessed Assurance Lani Smith

Gracious and Loving God, our Shepherd and Provider, we gather today as your flock, united in spirit and purpose. As you lead us beside still waters and restore our souls, we come before you with humble hearts, bringing our offerings and tithes.

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Offertory Blessing:

Bless these gifts, O Lord, as a reflection of the abundance you have poured into our lives. May these contributions serve as tools in your hands, nurturing the valleys, restoring the broken, and making righteousness flourish. With thankful hearts, we dedicate these gifts to your work, trusting in your guidance and rejoicing in your everlasting goodness and mercy. Together, let us dwell in the house of the Lord forever, sharing the blessings we have received, and celebrating the bounty of your love. In the name of Christ, our Savior and Shepherd, we pray. Amen.

Congregational Prayer: Pastor Mark will lead us in congregational prayer followed by: “This we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:” *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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and glory forever. Amen*

Closing Hymn Guide My Feet 741

Benediction

Now may the God of peace equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Postlude: Blessed Assurance Lani Smith

PRAYER REQUESTS FOR CHURCH FAMILY

Home: Linda Hanson, John & Arlene Blackley, Marion Canary, Diane Haflin, Arlene & Dick Sedlacek, June Tindall, Grace Young, Kathy Sandel, Jean Petersen, Edith Zervos, Anna Alfieri, Ron Barone, Marilyn DeSocio, Ellen Bridgman

Georgetown, The Pines: Alice Dykstra

Hamilton Place, The Pines: Audrey Wells

PRAYER REQUESTS FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS

Grace Young – Friend Ginny passed away recently. Ginny had been on our prayer list for a while. Kathy Sandel, our Minister of Music, thanksgiving for husband Gene’s therapy completion and for a normal health day for her.

Marilyn DeSocio for Brother Howard Wainer, Son-in-law John Carney

Marion Canary for great grandson Keith Brennon

John & Linda Chapman for Jason, Donald, Evolie, Maureen & Ruby

Irene Sheary asks for prayers for son George
June Tindall for daughter Vicki, granddaughter Rebecca, and brothers in law Bob and Bill, neice
Kathy and family
Barbara Baker for stepson James Baker, nephew Robert Ballard, Nancy Cashmere, Danny DePrizio,
John Figiel, and Nancie Souder
Irma Saia for son Matt Jr., Maria Vas, Ethel Donlin, Nancy Broadwell, gr. Nephew David
Jean Petersen for nieces Jennifer, Sandy, and grandniece Missy
Anna Alfieri for John, Tony, and Michael
Antoinette & Phil Gallucci for Rosemarie
Liz Petry for prayers for family of James Protus
Arlene Sedlacek for Warren Reth
Helen Brewster for Isabella Smedlie
Matt & Judy Hill – Maurice Shea
Cathy Gibson – brother Richard, sister Rosemary
Sue Staib – brother-in-law Paul SooHoo
Joy Horn Del Grosso – husband Pat
Joy Horn Del Grosso – Pastor Peter Butler
Deborah Schaper – Bob Scott, severe back injury
Gilberta Sockney – Dot Magee and her Son John
Dawn Witek - Ron
Pray for our Missionaries: The Silva's, Janelle, Felipe, and children in Romania
Lenny Gunther (From Claire Alvidrez)
Doug for the families of the victim of accident on Pinewald-Keswick Road
Tina for family members struggling
Prayers for the family of Betty Snyder who passed away on March 20th.
Helen Brewster – Prayers for Ed and continued healing for baby Isabelle.

The Food Pantry and Clothing Tree are open
Monday and Thursday 9-12

Pastor Mark's phone number 908-675-1498

For any changes on the prayer list, please call the office at
732-350-0232 Monday & Tuesday 9-12

The bulletins are mailed on Wednesdays, so please call Monday or Tuesday for prayer requests

Announcements for Today:

We have a nursery available in the fellowship hall. Beverly Poyner has volunteered to start this new program for parents bringing children into the church. This is new for us and look forward to this being an important ministry for us.

Upper Room for April has been delivered and are in the hallways. Please feel free to pick up an upper room.

Welcome to recent visitors we have had at our services! Anita, Kathy, Joyce, Melissa, Nancy, John, Marilyn, Mary, David, Kevin, Tracy, Jennifer, Doug, Peter, Susan, Traycee, Easter Family visitors, our friends at our ecumenical service. Welcome to all visitors! Welcome also to Janet, Linda and Jeff, Holly and her Children Evan and Ethan.

We are still looking to fill two slots on Consistory by Church members. Please see Pastor Mark, or any of the elders if you are interested.

**Kathy Sandel
Concert, Saturday
May 11th 3PM**

Anyone wishing to bake or bring anything to our Coffee Hour Please see Kathy Chmielewski. Our Coffee hours are the second Sunday of each month (Except July and August)

Bible Study this week April 24th 1 PM!

Commentary on Today's scripture from Isaiah:

Below is researched commentary regarding today's lesson from Isaiah for your reading:

The passage from Isaiah 53:5-7 is one of the most profound and poignant prophecies regarding the Messiah, often referred to as part of the "Suffering Servant" songs in Isaiah. These verses specifically highlight the themes of sacrifice, suffering, and redemption, key aspects that



Christians believe are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Here is a detailed commentary on how these verses relate to the prophecy of Christ:

Isaiah 53:5-7 (NIV) Verse 5: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." Verse 6: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verse 7: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."

Commentary and Relation to Christ:

1. **Sacrificial Imagery:** The imagery of being "pierced" and "crushed" vividly portrays suffering and sacrifice. Christians interpret these as foreshadowing the crucifixion of Jesus, where His physical suffering and death were understood as the ultimate sacrifice for humanity's sins. The specific mention of "piercing" directly correlates to the New Testament accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, where he was nailed to the cross.

2. **Substitutionary Atonement:** "The punishment that brought us peace was on him" suggests a substitutionary atonement, a concept where the Servant suffers as a substitute for others to bring about reconciliation between humanity and God. This aligns closely with Christian theology regarding Jesus' role in atoning for the sins of humanity, bringing peace between God and man through His sacrifice.

3. **Healing Through Suffering:** The phrase "by his wounds we are healed" connects the Servant's physical suffering to spiritual and relational healing. In Christian belief, this healing extends beyond physical ailments to encompass spiritual restoration and eternal life, provided through Christ's atonement.

4. **Sheep Going Astray:** Verse 6 highlights human waywardness and collective sin ("We all, like sheep, have gone astray"). This metaphor of sheep represents humanity's vulnerability and tendency to sin, while the Servant takes on these iniquities. Jesus' mission, as described in the Gospels, involves calling sinners to repentance and restoring the lost, analogous to a shepherd caring for his sheep.

5. **Silent Suffering:** The description of the Servant as silent before his oppressors ("yet he did not open his mouth") parallels the New Testament descriptions of Jesus during His trial and crucifixion, where He often remained silent before His accusers (e.g., Mark 15:5). This silence reflects submission to God's will and the fulfillment of His redemptive mission.

The prophecy in Isaiah 53, with its rich and complex portrayal of the Suffering Servant, is seen by Christians as a direct prophetic revelation of the nature and purpose of Christ's life and death. It highlights the Messiah not as a conquering hero, as some might have expected, but as a humble servant who suffers for the sake of others' salvation. This redefinition of power and kingship, from

dominion to service and sacrifice, is central to the Christian understanding of how God's love and justice are manifested through Jesus Christ.

The Role of Elder of the Reformed Church in America

For the next few weeks, we will provide information on the offices and government of the Reformed Church in America. This week we provide the role of Elder in the Consistory:

Our Congregational Church Government:

“Christ, according to the New Testament, has appointed officers to govern the church under himself. Their authority to govern derives from him even though they are elected by the people.” –Preamble, *RCA Book of Church Order*

To hold office in the church is a God-given responsibility, not a superior position. **Three offices exist within the local church: elder, deacon, and minister.** Those who hold these offices work together as the [consistory](#) to govern the life and ministry of a congregation. Together, the three offices represent Christ and carry out the work of the Holy Spirit.

Elders and ministers also participate in larger governing assemblies—classis, regional synod, and General Synod—in the Reformed Church in America.

In the Reformed Church in America, a fourth office exists, that of [General Synod professor](#). This office serves by preparing and certifying candidates for the ministry of Word and sacrament. General Synod professors also serve in a “ministry of teaching within the RCA as a whole,” as stated in the *Book of Church Order*.

The role of elder

The first duty of the elders is to seek and follow the will of Christ for the church. Elders are primarily and particularly responsible for the spiritual oversight of the congregation. This includes attending to sound teaching within the church; ensuring that members are nurtured through Scripture, the sacraments, worship, and prayer; and guiding the congregation through government and discipline. As the body responsible for spiritual oversight, the board of elders welcomes new members, admits children to the Lord's table, hears confessions of faith, and acts on requests for infant baptism.

Pastoral care—for the congregation and the minister

Elders are responsible for community, woven together by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit—a community that points to the fellowship of the kingdom of God. Elders should thus take special opportunities to know and guide congregation members toward deeper faith and discipleship, including regular and intentional home visits with congregation members. Pastoral care, a responsibility of the elders, requires good listening skills, intentional visits, and empathetic care. Elders should also visit those who are in the hospital and in nursing homes, those who are homebound, and those who seek the counsel of a trusted friend.

In Reformed churches, elders are also to provide oversight and care for the minister, too. This involves monitoring the conduct of the minister, in preaching and teaching, in word and deed. In addition, elders are to attend to the care and spiritual nourishment of the minister. As people who work closely with the pastor in the ministry of the church, elders are in a good position to provide that care and nurture through counsel, encouragement, kind words, or a listening ear.

Guiding through discipline

Church discipline is also a responsibility of the elders. Elders, together with the minister, are responsible for holding each other and the community to a loving accountability. The positive purpose of church discipline is to guide members to mature discipleship; thus, to discipline is to aid in discipleship. As the congregation walks and works together as a community of disciples, elders need to remember their call to care for the whole body of Christ, taking disciplinary action when needed to prevent harm and suffering for an individual and the congregation.

Most matters of discipline and guidance can likely be addressed through the support and encouragement of personal, pastoral, or professional intervention. However, in more extreme cases, the board of elders may need to consult the disciplinary procedures outlined in the RCA's [*Book of Church Order*](#)

A commissioned pastor is an elder, too

In the Reformed Church in America, a commissioned pastor is an elder who has been commissioned by a particular classis to fulfill a specific ministry need. After the completion of training, a commissioned pastor can serve in one of many roles, such as church planter, pastor, hospice worker, or any ministry the classis deems fit.

[Get more information about commissioned pastors and the process to become one.](#)

For More Information on RCA Creeds and Confessions, please visit www.rca.org. There is so much information that summarizes the Reformed Church in America. The Oldest Protestant Denomination in America,