A Service of Celebration for the Life of

Ruth F. McArthur

11 November 1957 — 22 September 2025

2 p.m., Friday, October 10, 2025

University Lutheran Church
66 Winthrop St., Cambridge, Mass.
unilu.org

Prelude

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" [NEW BRITAIN] — Tune from William Walker's *Southern Harmony* (1835); setting by Ennis Fruhauf (b. 1944)

"Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" [OLD HUNDREDTH] — Tune by Louis Bourgeois (1510–1561); settings by Wilbur Held (1914–2015) and Bruce Brolsma (b. 1948)

"The King of Love My Shepherd Is" [ST. COLUMBA] — Irish tune; settings by Wilbur Held (1914–2015), Charles V. Stanford (1852–1924), David Cherwien (b. 1957), and C. S. Lang (1891–1971)

"Morning Has Broken" [BUNESSAN] — Gaelic tune; setting by G. Winston Cassler (1906–1990)

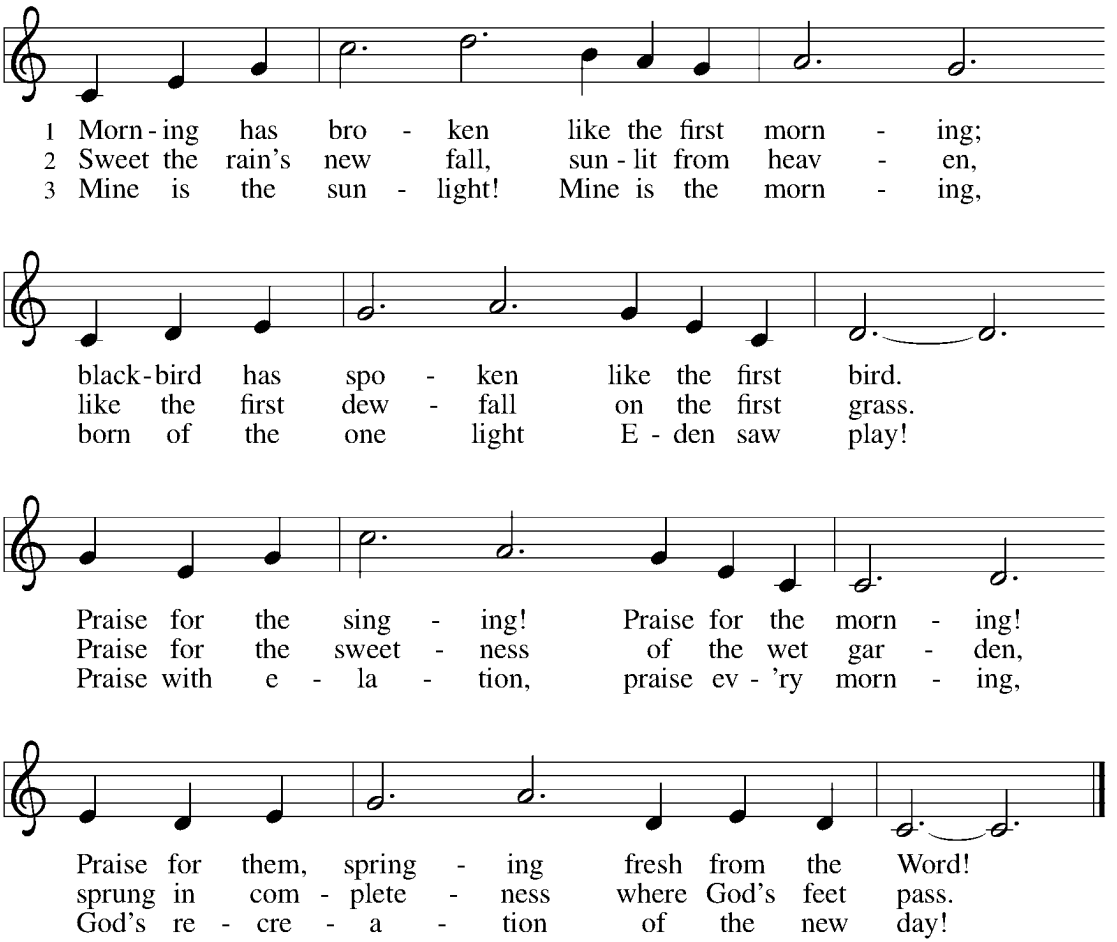
GATHERING

Bell and Welcome

Welcome in the name of Jesus, the Savior of the world. We are gathered to worship, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, to remember before God our sister Ruth, to give thanks for her life, to commend her to our merciful redeemer, and to comfort one another in our grief.

Gathering Hymn

Morning Has Broken



Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965
Music: BUNESSAN, Gaelic tune

Apostolic 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.**

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

O God of grace and glory, we remember before you today our sister Ruth. We thank you for giving her to us to know and to love as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see that death has been swallowed up in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may live in confidence and hope until, by your call, we are gathered to our heavenly home in the company of all your saints; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

Poem "Persistance" by Ruth McArthur
(*read by Christina Casano and Katie Casano*)

I.
The silhouette of the barn swallow
against the evening sky
is odd.

Adhered crosswise to its tail is
the feather of a much larger bird,
At least as long as the swallow.

The swallow perches on power wire,
pecks, preens itself persistently,
almost frantically.

II.
Surely the bird will be dead under the wire this morning.
How can it fly dragging such extra weight?
Or catch insects on the wing
or escape the red-shouldered hawk
Who regularly patrols the area?

But there is no corpse.
A shadow crosses the ground—
the blighted bird,
flying,
a bit wobbly,
but flying.
All morning it swoops
with the other swallows.

III.
By evening, the swallow has re-mastered
the art,
flitting about with no detectable lack of grace,
swooping
from the nest above the front door
to hunt,
returning to feed the young,
huge burden still attached.

It has learned to carry on.

First Reading Micah 6:6–8

A reading from Micah.

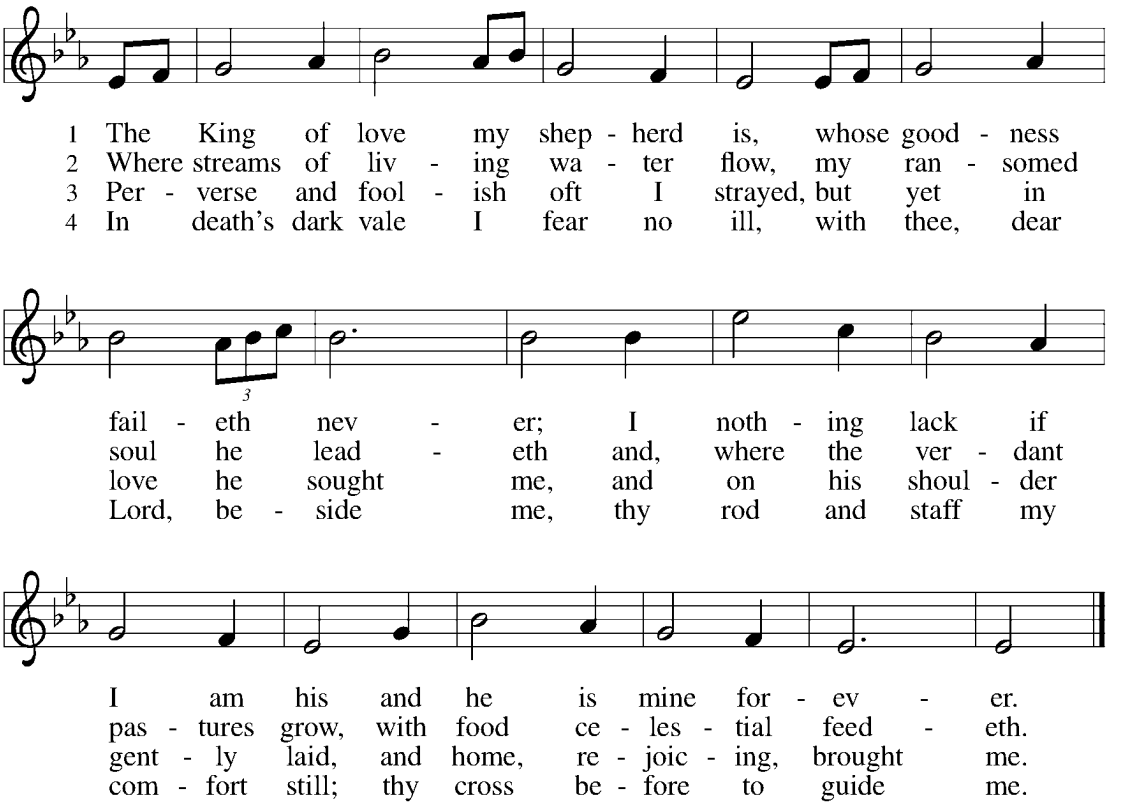
6"With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
7Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
8He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

Remembrance *Marshall McArthur and Reidun Hilleman*

Psalm Psalm 23

The King of Love My Shepherd Is



5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
thine unction grace bestoweth;
and, oh, what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so, through all the length of days,
thy goodness faileth never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821–1877
Music: St. Columba, Irish tune

Poem "Before You Die" by Ruth McArthur
(*read by Daniel Stefanelli)*

Before You Die
Open your eyes.
Unclench your hands.
Take a small step.
Take another.
You must find
your heart and listen.
What does it seek?
What will fill it?
Learn that the butterflies
mobbing your purple flowers
they are queens on
Gregg's mistflower.
Get down on creaking knees
to see, really see
straggler daisies.
Let barn swallows
make their nest above
leave their mess
below your front door.
Storms will rage,
perhaps more fiercely.
Atrocities will continue.
You can also attend to those.
But listen. Observe. Create.
Don't take a shrunken heart
to your grave.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 13:4–7

A reading from First Corinthians.

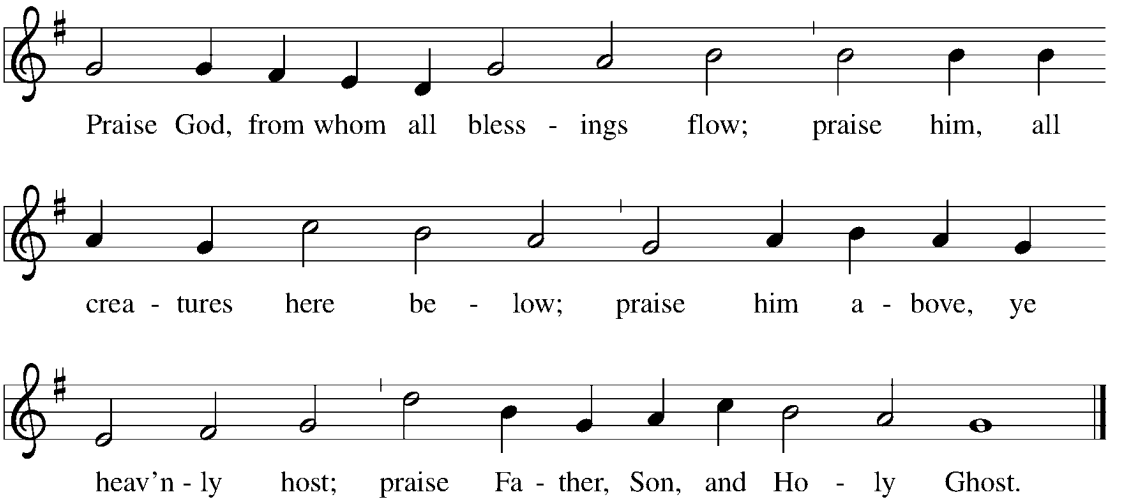
4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast,
it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is
not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not
delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always
trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

Remembrance *Meredith Sandiford*

Doxology

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

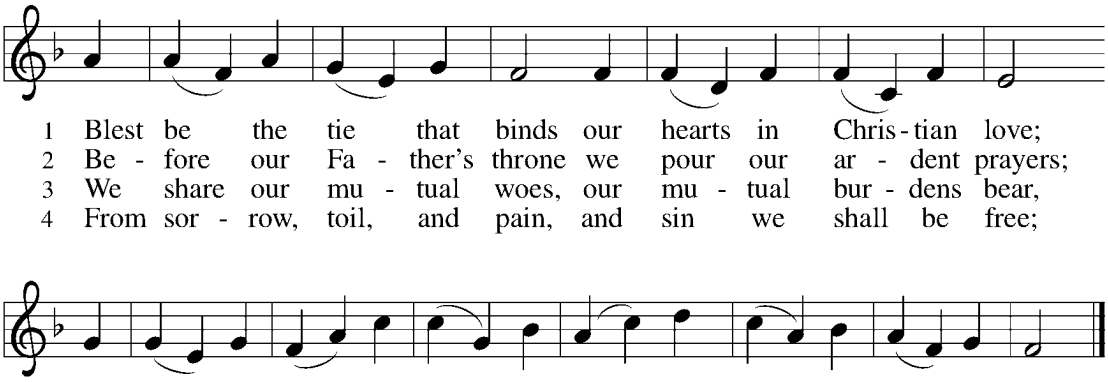


Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711
Music: OLD HUNDREDTH, Louis Bourgeois, 1510–1561

Sermon *Carrie Ballenger*

Hymn of the Day

Blest Be the Tie That Binds



Text: John Fawcett, 1740–1817, alt.
Music: DENNIS, Johann G. Nägeli, 1773–1836, adapt.

The Apostles' Creed

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

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 Ghost,
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.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray.

Almighty God, in holy baptism you have knit your chosen people together into one communion of saints in the body of Christ. Give to your whole church in heaven and on earth your light and your peace. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant that all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to share the new life in Christ. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give courage and faith to all who mourn, and a sure and certain hope in your loving care, that, casting all their sorrow on you, they may have strength for the days ahead. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that, where this world groans in grief and pain, your Holy Spirit may lead us to bear witness to your light and life. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Help us, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all grace, we give you thanks because by his death our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed the power of death and by his resurrection he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Make us certain that because he lives we shall live also, and that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, will be able to separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach 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 the glory,
forever. Amen.

SENDING

Commendation

Let us commend Ruth to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer.

Silence is kept.

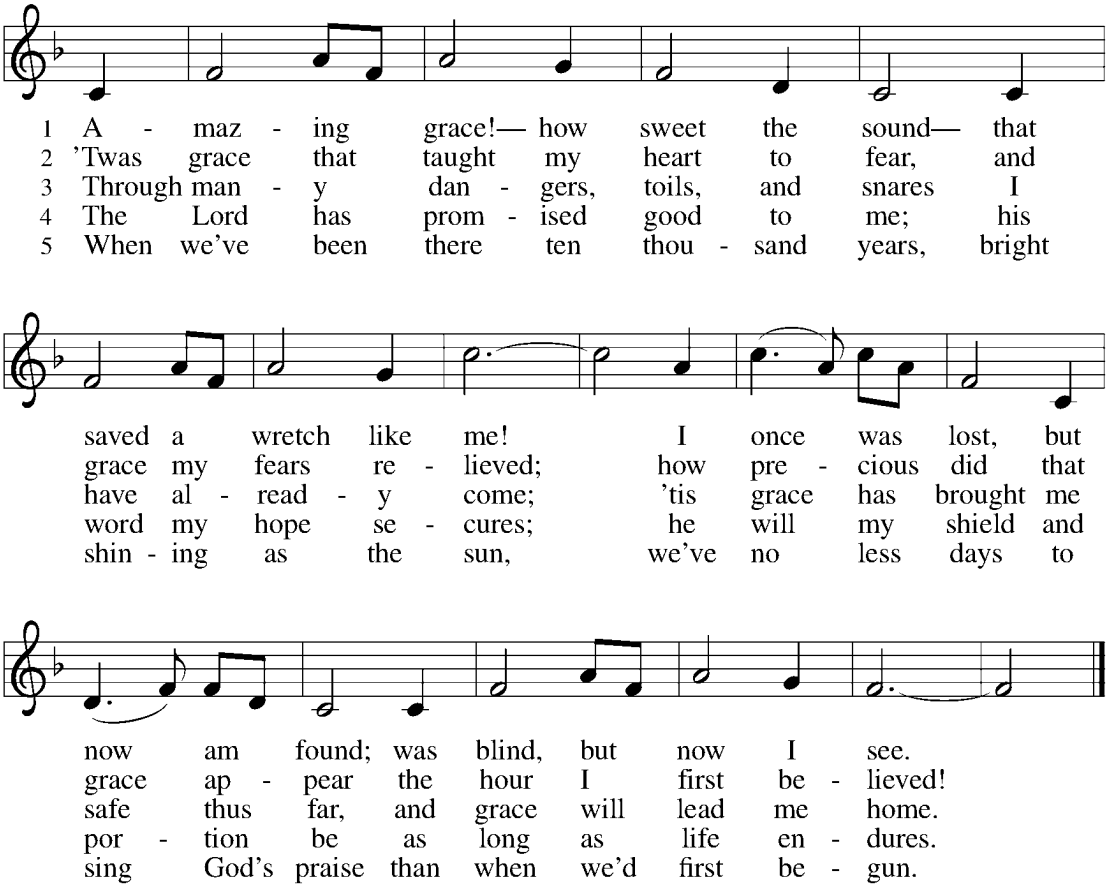
Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant Ruth. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. **Amen.**

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn ELW 750

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound



Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5
Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony,* 1835

Dismissal

Let us go forth in peace,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Postlude

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" [NEW BRITAIN] — Tune from William Walker's *Southern Harmony* (1835); settings by Charles Callahan (1951–2023) and David Cherwien (b. 1957)

Serving Today

Presiding Minister and Preacher: Carrie Ballenger;
Remembrances: Marshall McArthur and Reidun Hilleman;
Readers: Christina Casano, Katie Casano, and Daniel Stefanelli;
Musician: Imogene Stulken

Ruth F. McArthur

11 November 1957 — 22 September 2025

Ruth McArthur, devoted wife, mother, sister, and grannie passed away peacefully on Monday, September 22, 2025, at the age of 67. She was a nurturing soul who cared for people, pets and the environment. Always ready to share an adventure, she had a grand and sometimes wicked sense of humor.

Born and raised in Tallahassee, Ruth lived all over the country — from New Orleans to New York City, to Memphis, Houston, and Georgia, eventually settling in San Antonio and Boerne, Texas. Her latest adventure with her husband Craig was moving to Boston to be near her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren.

In high school, she was a talented saxophone player. She carried this talent into adulthood as a somewhat regular participant in local community music group JP Honk. She was a lifelong Presbyterian, and sang in the choir.

She was a lifelong reader, and got her baby brother interested in The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, and One Hundred Years of Solitude. She enjoyed going door-to-door singing Christmas carols with the neighborhood group, and in college, she worked at the restaurant Frisch's Big Boy.

Always generous with her time, she spent much of her days volunteering for organizations that served the greater good. Everything from the PTA and Girl Scout troop leader, to the League of Women Voters, Mass Audubon, and Community Servings. She was a natural when it came to working with the homeless in San Antonio. One of her proudest accomplishments was becoming a Texas Parks and Wildlife Master Naturalist.

Ruth was a writer with several published poems and books, including many self-published stories written just for her grandsons. Her Scrabble skills were unmatched — just ask her nephew. She was also an avid birder who often traveled the country with friends on birding excursions.

She adored spending time with her grandkids, who had become the center of her life. She was always available for whenever Grannie was needed, for hugs when in tears, cuddle time, and making pancakes and waffles, and was always up for helping them with various cooking and arts and crafts projects. She guided them into the world of Scrabble and Monopoly.

Ruth was preceded in death by her parents Bertha McArthur and Charles McArthur and sister Katherine McArthur. Ruth is survived by her husband of 45 years Craig Childs; daughter Meredith Sandiford; son-in-law Steven Sandiford; grandsons Luke and Charlie; sisters Anne and Carol; brothers Marshall and Sam; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

The family is hosting an open house on Saturday, October 11, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at 114 Sheridan Street (Jamaica Plain, MA 02130) to gather and remember Ruth.

Donations in Ruth's honor can be made to the Mass Audubon Society (massaudubon.org) or Break Through Cancer (breakthroughcancer.org).

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Carrie Ballenger, *Pastor*
Gracious Moyo, *Associate Pastor*
Kristian Kohler, *Office Administrator*
Lorraine Fitzmaurice, *Music Director—Choir / Building Manager*
Imogene Stulken, *Music Director—Organ*
Mary Pederson Metelmann, *Council President*
Ed Bucher, *Treasurer and Bookkeeper*
Gail Bucher, *Service Deacon*
Chris Porter, *Financial Secretary*
Susan Worst, *Webmaster*
Joyce DeGreeff, *Lutheran Chaplain at Northeastern University*
Andrew Heisen, *Lutheran Chaplain at MIT*

Welcome to University Lutheran Church, a Christian witness and ministry of and to members of the academic and wider communities in Cambridge-Boston — and, virtually, across the world! We are a Reconciling in Christ congregation, welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. We are also a member congregation of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO).

Land Acknowledgment: *University Lutheran Church is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Pawtucket and Massa-adchu-es-et (Massachusett) peoples, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have called, and who continue to call, this land their home.*