



CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

A Service of Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation

Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden, Celebrating

March 29, 2026



200 Duhring Street, Bluefield, WV 24701

(304) 327-6861

www.cecblf.org

Prelude

The congregation will gather in the narthex for the blessing of the palms

The Liturgy of the Palms

The people standing.

Celebrant

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

People

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

Celebrant

Let us pray. Assist us mercifully with your help, O Lord God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Matthew 21:1-11

When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *People* It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Celebrant

It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Let these branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

At this time the blessed Palms will be distributed to the congregation.

Celebrant Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

People Hosanna in the highest.

The Procession

Deacon Let us go forth in peace.

People In the name of Christ. Amen.

The people process in, following the cross and choir, holding branches in their hands, while the hymn is played. "All glory, laud, and honor."

The Processional Hymn

All glory, laud, and honor

H 154

Bishop Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People And blessed be his Kingdom, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Bishop then continues

Bishop There is one body and one Spirit;

People There is one hope in God's call to us;

Bishop One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

People One God and Father of all.

The people remain standing.

The Collect for the Day

Bishop The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Bishop Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The people sit.

The First Lesson

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord GOD has given me

the tongue of a teacher,

that I may know how to sustain

the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens--

wakens my ear

to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord GOD has opened my ear,

and I was not rebellious,

I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,

and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;

I did not hide my face

from insult and spitting.

The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Lector The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God!

The Psalm

Psalm 31:9-16

In te, Domine, speravi

The Psalm will be read responsively by whole verse

9. Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble;
my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.
10. For my life is wasted with grief,
and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction,
and my bones are consumed.
11. I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my
neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance;
when they see me in the street they avoid me.
12. I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;
I am as useless as a broken pot.
13. For I have heard the whispering of the crowd;
fear is all around; they put their heads together against me;
they plot to take my life.
14. But as for me, I have trusted in you, O LORD.
I have said, "You are my God.
15. My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.

16. Make your face to shine upon your servant,
and in your loving-kindness save me

The Second Lesson

Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death--
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Lector The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God!

The people standing.

Hymn

When I survey the wondrous cross

H 474

The Gospel Lesson

Matthew 27:11-54

Reader 1 The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” But when he was accused by

the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.” Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!” Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Reader 2 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.

All Stand

And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

Reader 3 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

Gospeller The Gospel of the Lord.

The Sermon

The Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden

Presentation and Examination of the Candidates

Bishop The Candidates will now be presented.

Presenters We present these persons for Confirmation.

The Bishop asks the candidates Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil?

Candidates I do.

Bishop Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Candidates I do, and with God's grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.

After all have been presented, the Bishop addresses the congregation, saying

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

People We will.

The Bishop then says these or similar words

Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

The Baptismal Covenant

Bishop Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Bishop Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He 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,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Bishop Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People 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.

Bishop Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the
breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin,
repent and return to the Lord?

People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in
Christ?

People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as
yourself?

People I will, with God's help.

Bishop Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the
dignity of every human being?

People I will, with God's help.

Prayers for the Candidates

The Bishop then says to the congregation

Let us now pray for these persons who have renewed their commitment to
Christ.

A Person appointed leads the following petitions

Leader Deliver them, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Open their hearts to your grace and truth.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Fill them with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Keep them in the faith and communion of your holy Church.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Teach them to love others in the power of the Spirit.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Send them into the world in witness to your love.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader Bring them to the fullness of your peace and glory.

People Lord, hear our prayer.

A period of silence follows.

Then the Bishop says

Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in these your servants the covenant you have made with them at their Baptism. Send them forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns

with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For Confirmation

The Bishop lays hands upon each one and says

Strengthen, O Lord, your servant *N.* with your Holy Spirit; empower *him* for your service; and sustain *him* all the days of *his* life. *Amen.*

For Reception

N., we recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion. God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you. *Amen.*

For Reaffirmation

N., may the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom. *Amen.*

The Bishop concludes with this prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, let your fatherly hand ever be over these your servants; let your Holy Spirit ever be with them; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of your Word, that they may serve you in this life, and dwell with you in the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Peace

Bishop The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of God's love.

Announcements

The Bishop's Visitation loose offering will be designated to the Peterkin Summer Camp

The Holy Communion

Offertory Hymn

Glory be to Jesus

H 479

After the Offertory piece has been played the People stand as the gifts are brought forward and sing the familiar tune of the "Old 100th"

might, Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,
 God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are
 full, full, of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na
 in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na
 in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The people stand or kneel. Then the Bishop continues

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Bishop and People

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

The Bishop continues

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

Bishop



People

Bishop And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Bishop

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,

for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Bishop then breaks the Consecrated Bread and says

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

People Therefore let us keep the feast.

The Bishop then presents the Sacrament to the People

The Gifts of God, for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Distribution of the Holy Sacrament

All baptized Christians, regardless of age or denomination, are invited and encouraged to receive the sacrament. Communion is distributed at the altar rail. It is the tradition of this parish that 12 to 14 people at a time receive communion at the altar rail, at which point all are dismissed together to return

to their seats and another group may move forward to the rail. Gluten free wafers are available by asking the priest. If you do not wish to receive the sacrament but would like to receive a blessing, please join us at the rail and cross your arms over your chest. Depart through the doors at either side of the rail, returning to your pew through the door by the reader's lectern.

Communion Hymn

O sacred head, sore wounded

H 168

Our Prayer after Communion

BCP 365

After Communion, the Bishop says

Let us pray.

Bishop and People


Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Bishop Sings the Blessing

The Blessing Over the People

Bishop
—|  |—

Our help is in the Name of the Lord;

People
—|  |—

The maker of heaven and earth.

Bishop
—|  |—

Blessed be the Name of the Lord;

People
—|  |—

From this time forth for ever-more.

The Dismissal

Deacon Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

People Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Right after the service, everyone's invited downstairs to Rowley Hall for a reception with the Bishop and his wife, Melissa.

Please Keep the Following in Your Prayers: Bonnie Taylor, Joe Sanders, Bob Walk, Martha Linkous, Ed and Gladys Fortune, Ivy and the Gaines Family, Fr. Russ and Debbie Hatfield, Mary Lou, Don Harris, John and Becky Beckett, Jim and John Paine, Dee Puckett, Becky Steorts, Kathy Burge, Kaye, David Lindahl, Brandon Green, Haley and Alex Jusiel, Carolyn Ratcliffe, Felicia, Brad, Jerry and Debbie Hickman, Fran Alba, Rob Roush, Mya, Frederick Williams, George, Mark, Sandra, Dick, Elizabeth, Betty Carol, Jim Crosby.

The Altar arrangements are given by Jenny Mahood for the greater Glory of God and in memory of loved ones. The Chancel rail flowers are given in honor of Bishop Cowden and his visit to Christ Church by the Vestry.

Participants in Today's Liturgy

Celebrant

The Rt. Rev. Matthew D. Cowden

Assisting

The Rev. Paul Barker

Deacon

The Rev. Brother Ray Escott

Organist & Choirmaster

Hon. Canon Terry E. Whittington, Jr.

Lectors

Ted Lewis

Becky Beckett

Rob Merritt

Acolytes

Bill Denney

Becky Kersey

Altar Guild

Patty Richardson, Linda Ammar

Birthdays this week: Elizabeth Sudduth, Liam Cole

Attendance Last Sunday:

65

Calendar of Events

Maundy Thursday – April 2

Service 7:00 pm

Good Friday – April 3

Stations of the Cross noon,

Liturgy, Passion 5:30pm

Easter Sunday – April 5

Service 10:00am

Wednesday – April 8

Union Mission 4:00pm

Wednesday – April 15

Vestry meeting 5:00pm

Men's Dinner 6:00pm

Thursday – April 16

Food Pantry 9:00-11:00am

Tuesday – April 21

DOK meeting 10:30am

Wednesday – April 22

Union Mission 3:30pm

Announcements

Spring Collection Schedule for Food Pantry Recipients:

- **March:** socks...they can be new or gently used/clean!

Your kindness continues to bless others. Thank you!

Coffee Hour: Coffee Hour hosts are needed **April 12, 26**. Please sign up on the whiteboard located outside the library. Contact Darla Olson at: 304-634-5655 darlanolson@outlook.com or Mary Catherine Williams at: (276-326-2411) or mkw@dlwco.com if you have any questions. Thank you for helping Christ Church in this important ministry.

Easter Lilies: A sign-up sheet for those wishing to purchase Easter lilies is available at the Usher's Table in the Narthex. They are \$22.50 each and may be dedicated in memory or in honor of a loved one or offered in thanksgiving for a particular blessing. Kindly submit your dedication to the parish office no later than Thursday, April 2nd. Thank you.

To Be Confirmed

Tricia Hein-Brewster
Keisha Harmon
Elizabeth Hart
Selena Bennett-Chafins
Brandon Stark
Jim Pulse

To Be Received

Nancy Stark
Chuck Stark
Todd Taylor
Barb Eichel
Bob Eichel
David Chafins
Jerry Wood

To Be Reaffirmed

Roger Harmon

Clergy, Staff, and Wardens of this Parish

The Rev. Paul Barker	Rector
Hon. Canon Terry E. Whittington, Jr.	Organist & Choirmaster
Ms. Emma Bennett	Parish Administrator
Mrs. Susanne Pulse	Office Assistant
Ms. Gina Vescio	Sexton
Dr. Ted Lewis	Senior Warden
Mr. David Kersey	Interim Junior Warden