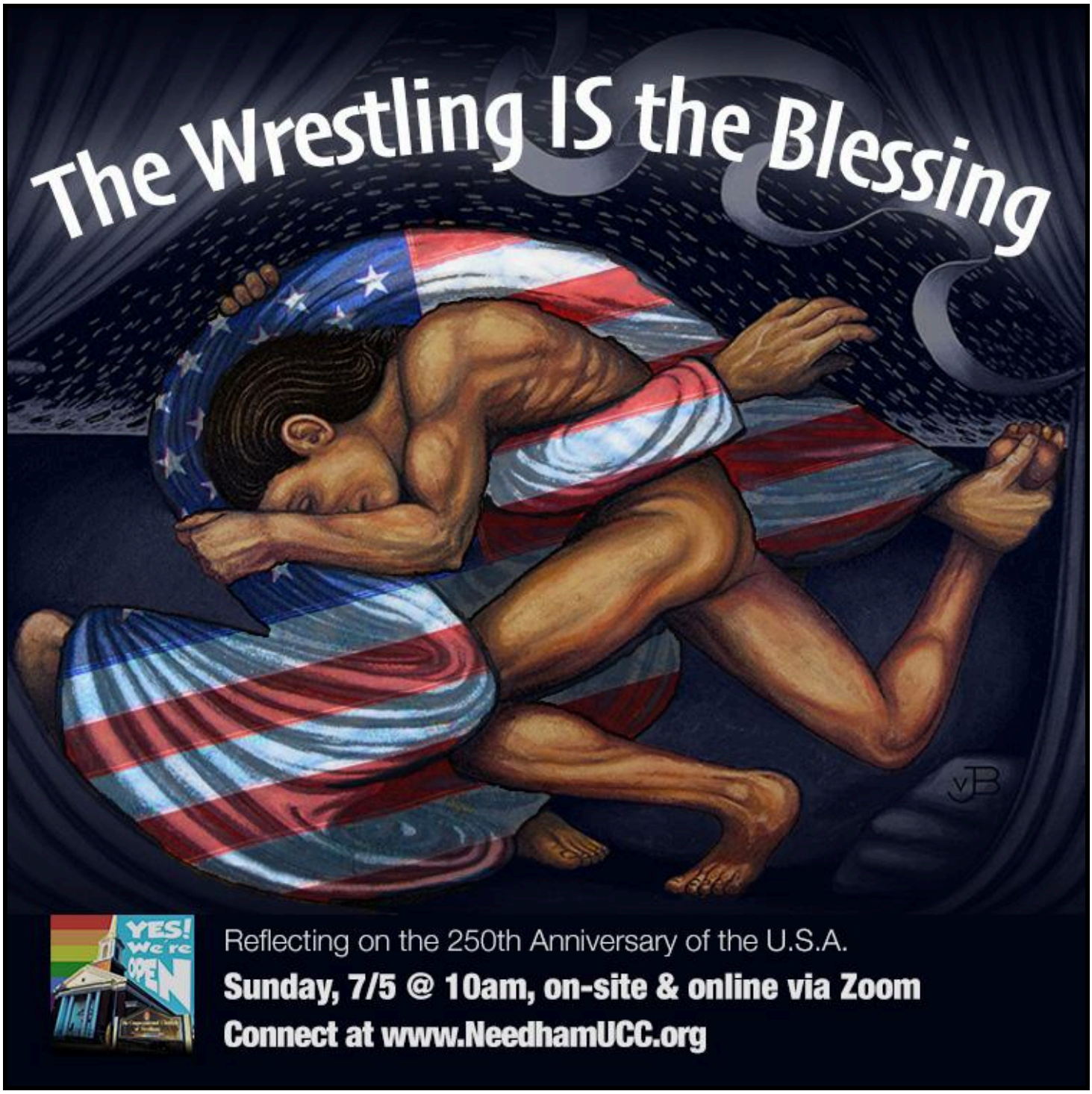


The Congregational Church of Needham, *United Church of Christ*

1154 Great Plain Ave, Needham MA 02492 / Tel 781.444.2510 / www.NeedhamUCC.org / IG @NeedhamUCC

Rev. John Gage, *senior minister*	revjohn@needhamucc.org
Valerie Becker, *director of music*	musicdirector@needhamucc.org
Darlene Wong, *director for children & youth*	childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org
Robin Bevilacqua, *church operations manager*	office@needhamucc.org
Cindy Sullivan, *financial administrator*	finance@needhamucc.org
Tom Mollerus, *moderator*	moderator@needhamucc.org
Pastor-Parish Relations Committee	prc@needhamucc.org

Welcome! Please take a moment to let us know you're here, whether you are an official church member, a frequent guest, or a first-timer. **Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone and follow the link to sign-in.** *There's a paper sign-in sheet in the foyer, if you prefer.*

Our Church Covenant *At the Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ, we strive to be a joyful, welcoming Christian Community. We seek to be faithful in a world torn by suffering, injustice, oppression, and war. We are inspired by God, Christ's Ministry, and the examples of other faithful people. We join together in worship and song, fellowship, study, and mission to embrace the risks and challenges of continuing Christ's ministry. We struggle to live out our faith in the world by furthering justice and peace, witnessing to the truth, and proclaiming God's love and mercy for all people.*

Our Open and Affirming Covenant *We believe that all people are created in the image of God, who loves each of us as we are. Following the example of Jesus, we welcome and affirm all people, including those of every age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; every racial, ethnic and cultural identity, and country of origin; every faith background, family configuration and economic situation; every mental and physical ability and health status; every life experience and circumstance. We strive to be an example of God's extravagant welcome and to live these beliefs in our worship, language, actions and relationships. We invite all people who desire to join us in this journey of faith to share in the full life and ministry of this church.*

If you are a guest with us today, a special welcome to you! We'd love to know that you're here. Please sign in using the QR code at the top of this page or the physical attendance sheet in the lobby. If you'd like to learn more about our church or what it means to be a member here, please reach out to Rev. John at **revjohn@needhamucc.org**.

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship! Quiet books and **pew pals** (soft toys) are available in the narthex/foyer just outside the sanctuary doors. All accessible bathrooms have **changing tables**.

WIFI in the sanctuary: **UCC_Guest**, password: **needhamucc**

FOR TODAY:

Sunday school is on hiatus for the summer, and will resume on Sunday, September 13. There continue to be age-appropriate books and coloring pages and crayons in the lobby for kids to use during worship, if they like.

For today's celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion / The Eucharist / The Lord's Supper, those in the sanctuary who wish to participate will be invited to come down the center aisle to receive a piece of gluten-free bread and a small sip of non-alcoholic juice in a compostable cup. Folks participating online, we hope you prepare something to eat and drink to participate with the body. ALL ARE INVITED TO SHARE, INCLUDING CHILDREN. You need not be a member of this church or any church to participate but simply desire to receive this blessing in your life.

Baby Basics Groceries Ongoing Food Collection

Every Sunday we collect specific proteins for the groceries we give to the families accessing diapers through Baby Basics every other month. In July, we're looking for large jars of all-natural **peanut butter**.

July 5, 2026

"Compassion is an equal-opportunity sentiment, one that is able, without hindrance, to cross frontiers, extend itself over all countries in misfortune, over all countries without exception; for all people are subject to the wretchedness of our human condition. . . .We must portray our country not only as beautiful and precious, but also is imperfect and very frail."

– Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots,* as reported by Robert Zaretsky in *The Subversive Simone Weil: A Life in Five Ideas*

PRELUDE *To A Wild Rose* by E. MacDowell Valerie Becker, *piano*

WELCOME Rev. John MacIver Gage

CALL TO WORSHIP *based on* Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 *(The Message)*

One: By an act of faith, Abraham and Sarah said yes to God's call to travel an unfamiliar road and call it home.

Many: In trust, they lived as strangers, in tents, they and their children, sharing God's promise.

One: They persevered with their eyes on that unseen city with real, eternal foundations–the kin-dom designed and built by God.

Many: **Generations passed without realizing all that was promised, but still they believed and put one foot in front of another.**

One: How? They saw the vision at a distance, waved their greeting, and accepted they were travelers in this world, always arriving, never arrived.

Many: People who live this way make it clear they are searching for their true home.

One: If they were homesick for the old land, the old way, they could have gone back. But they pressed on, citizens of God's commonwealth.

Many: **So we press on, our sights set on that better country where justice, peace, and compassion abound on earth as it is in heaven.**

All: Let us worship God together in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed.

HYMN ***God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand*** *(see below)*

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN PEACE ("Peace be with you / **And also with you"**)

READING FROM SCRIPTURE *from the Pentateuch* Genesis 32:22-33:1a

TIME ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

SERMON *The Wrestling IS the Blessing* Rev. John MacIver Gage

HYMN ***God of Eagles, God of Sparrows*** *(see below)*

SHARING OUR PRAYERS ("O God, **hear our prayer"**)

SINGING THE LORD'S PRAYER *(see below)*

SHARING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

For today's celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion / The Eucharist / The Lord's Supper, those in the sanctuary who wish to participate will be invited to come down the center aisle to receive a piece of gluten-free bread and a small sip of non-alcoholic juice in a compostable cup. Folks participating online, we hope you prepare something to eat and drink to participate with the body. ALL ARE INVITED TO SHARE, INCLUDING CHILDREN. You need not be a member of this church or any church to participate but simply desire to receive this blessing in your life.

MUSICAL OFFERING *Legend* by Amy Beach Valerie Becker, *piano*

INVITATION TO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

Feeling like you might like to make this congregation your church home? Curious to learn more about who we are and how we practice our faith and what membership means here? Reach out to Rev. John at **revjohn@needhamucc.org**

PARTNERING IN THE GOOD NEWS

HYMN ***America the Beautiful*** *(see below)*

PLEDGING OUR WHOLE LIVES TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF GOD

One: People of God, you are chosen and named as God's beloved. You have received the gift of Christian vocation, a holy calling to be lived out in all the various dimensions of your life, your relationships and communities, your work and your rest. Daily and richly we live in the promises of our baptism by water and the Spirit, sustained by grace to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God has made, and work for justice and peace.
I ask you, therefore: Will you endeavor to pattern your life on Jesus Christ, in gratitude to God and in service to others?

Many: We will, and we ask God to help us.

One: Will you strive to pursue the common good in public life, nurturing mutual care among neighbors near and far?

Many: We will, and we ask God to help us.

One: Will you pledge to bear witness in word and deed, commending what is true and right, renouncing what is unjust and harmful, and working to mend what is flawed?

Many: We will, and we ask God to help us.

One: Sovereign God, your Son Jesus lived within the structures of society even as he spoke truth to those in power and challenged systems of oppression. Give us courage, patience, and vision in our commitment to serve in Christ's name. Empower us all in our Christian vocation to be courageous disciples and responsible citizens and members of our communities. Grant that our life in the public realm may be grounded in love for our neighbors, care for the most vulnerable, and respect for the common life we share with one another and the earth, through Jesus Christ the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. And let all God's people say,

All: Amen.

BLESSING & POSTLUDE

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED: July 5, 2026

The Way Forward for Intelligent Life

7/12 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

Recently Pope Leo XIV issued his first official encyclical letter, entitled "Magnificent Humanity: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence." It was released on the 135th anniversary of one written by his namesake, Pope Leo XIII, in 1891, to defend human dignity in the face of rapid industrialization and unchecked capitalism. Guest preacher Rev. Adam Isbitsky will reflect with us on the fierce humility we must insist on as advances in artificial intelligence threaten to undermine our birthright as those made in God's image as creative beings and stewards of our planet. (Genesis 25:19-26:5)

About Our Guest Preacher: Rev. Adam Isbitsky

Rev. Adam Isbitsky (he/him) has been the minister of The Eliot Church in South Natick since January 2026. A transitional minister, Adam has served several area churches, including in Wellesley and Holliston. His ministry style combines depth of biblical understanding with progressive theology, UCC covenantal tradition, social justice engagement, and pastoral attention to the real joys and struggles of people's lives. An active performing artist, Adam co-founded and managed the Needham-based Next Generation Theatre Company from 2012–19.

Guatemala Partnership Summer Potluck

7/12 @ 6pm

All are invited to attend this fun and relaxing social event at Alan Clayton-Matthew's home (105 Concord St., Needham, MA). Ali Durbin, who grew up in our church and now lives in Guatemala, will be in town once again and will join us for conversation about happenings in our sister village of Santa María Tzejá. For questions, or to volunteer to bring a food or drink item, please contact Brenda Metzler at **bmetzler7@verizon.net**.

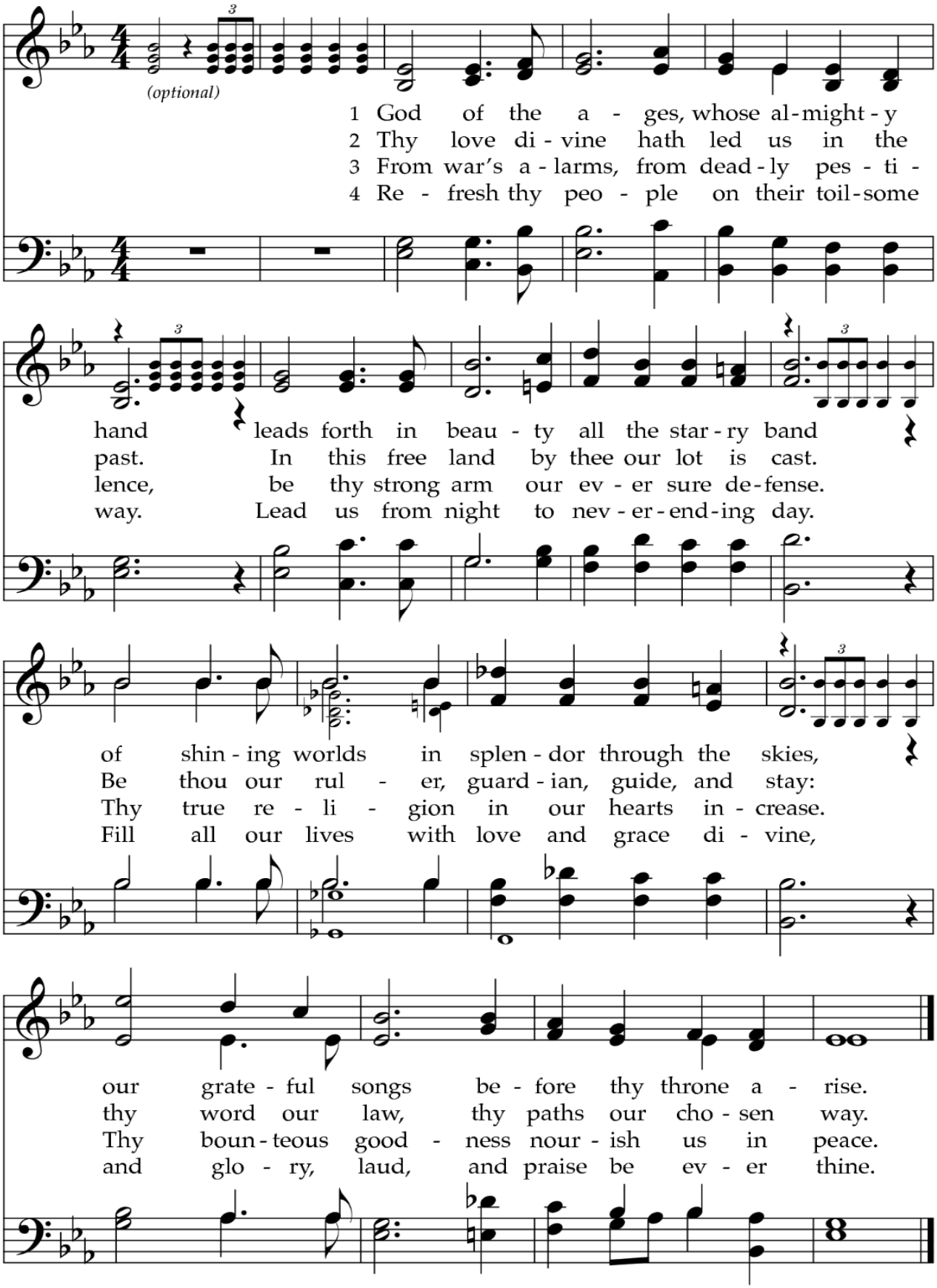
Surely the Lord is in This Place

7/19 @ 10am, on-site & online via Zoom at http://zoom.us/j/907548568

On the road, on the run, in trouble, in the wilderness, with a rock for pillow–*that* is where our ancestor in faith, Jacob, encountered God. So, no, we don't have to wait for everything to be perfect, including us, to experience the divine (which is good, because it never will be, and we won't either.) But still God comes to us, like Jesus born in the middle of the mess of a stable in the middle of the mess of our world. Surely God is in this place. (Genesis 28:10-19a)

This service will include sharing the sacrament of baptism with Bertie Guha-Anderson, child of Arjun Guha and Carolyn Anderson.

God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand



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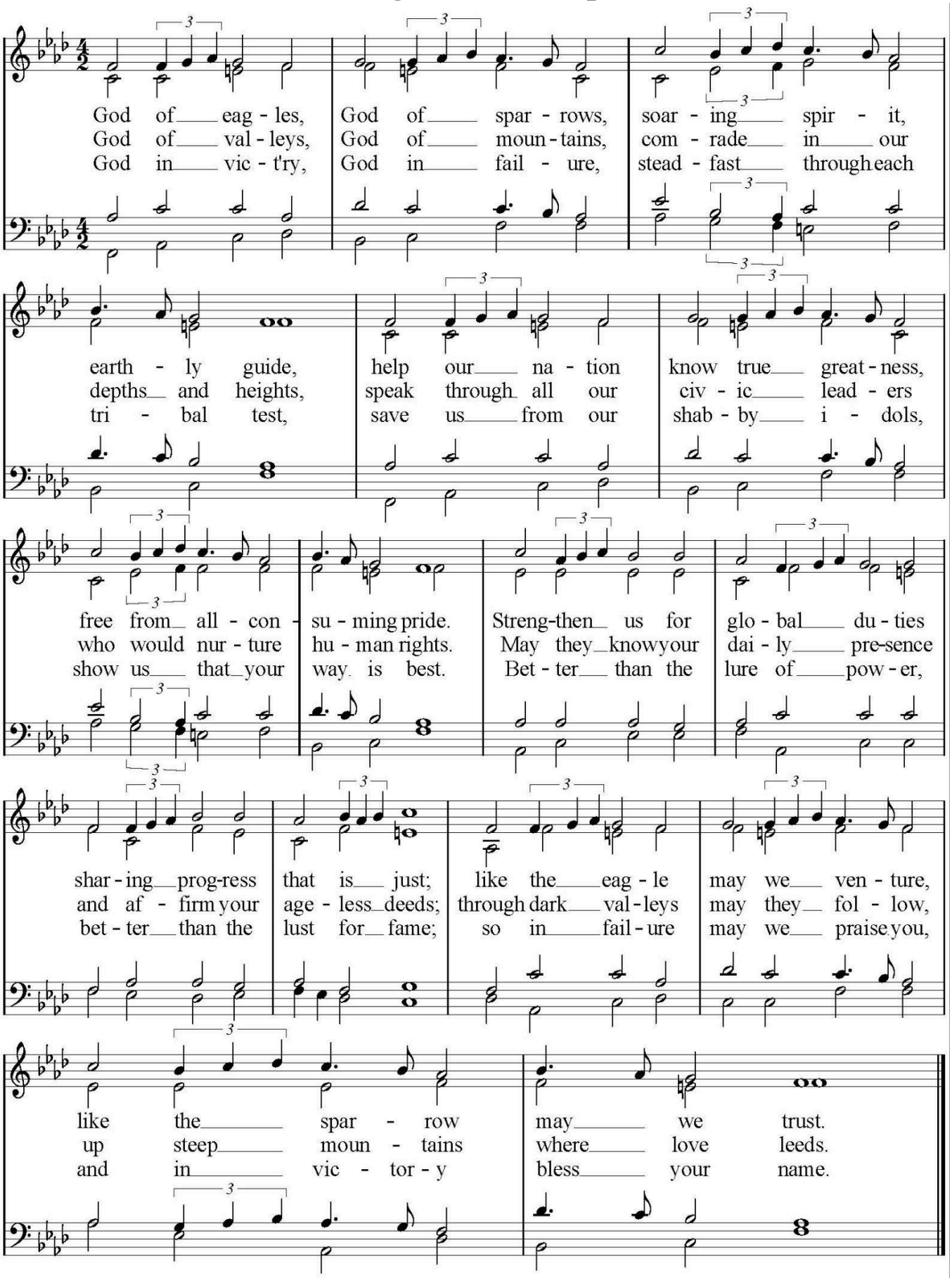
God of Eagles, God of Sparrows



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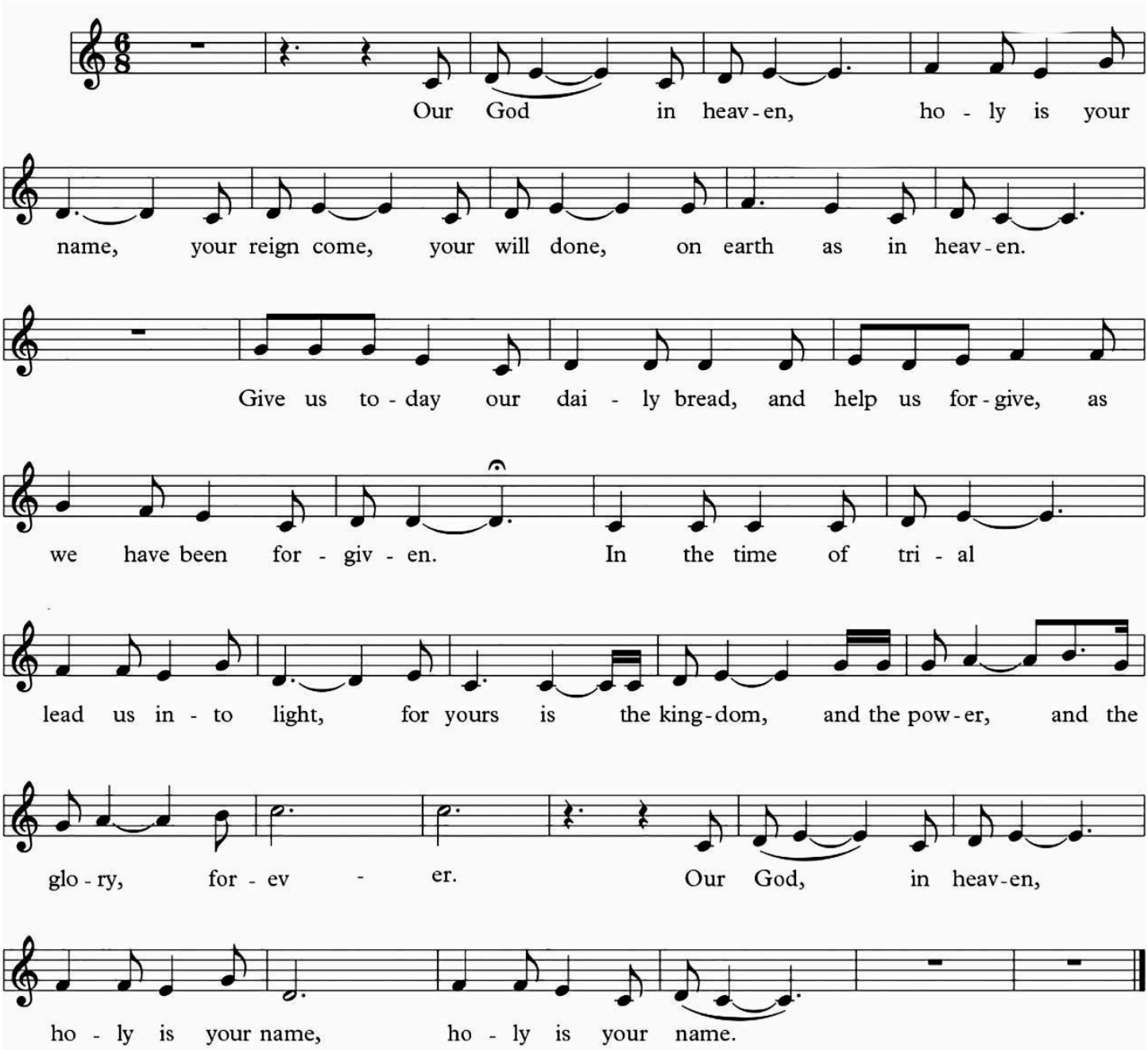
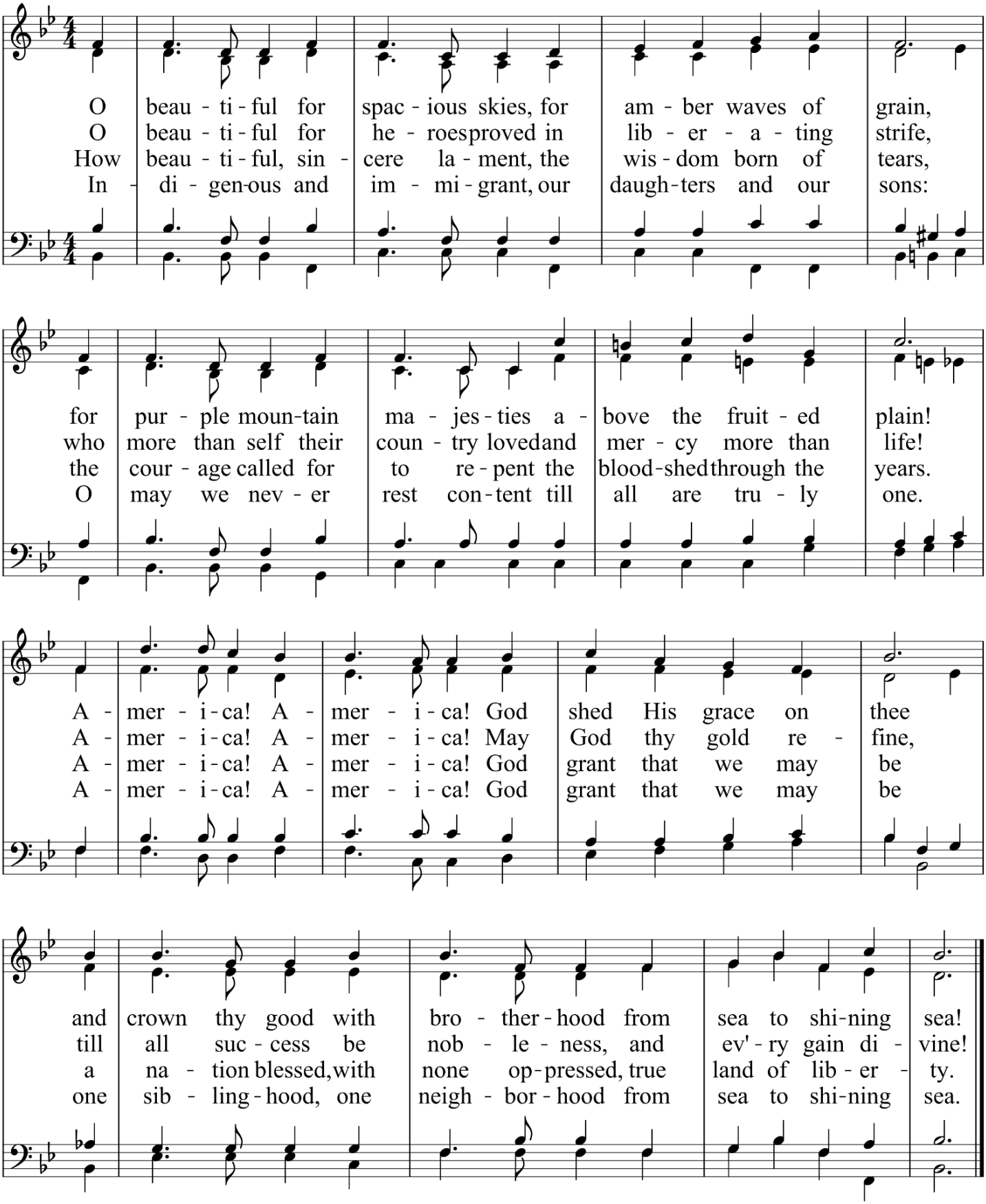
The Lord's Prayer



WORDS: Matt. 6:9-13, adapt. by Mark A. Miller and Laurie Zelman
MUSIC: Mark A. Miller

America the Beautiful (“O Beautiful, for Spacious Skies”)



Text: v1, Katharine Lee Bates (1893, alt.), v2-4, Miriam Therese Winter (1993); Tune: MATERNA (Ward)