

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fifth Sunday of Easter



SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2024

10 A.M.

INTRODUCTION

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.



+ GATHERING +

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, the wellspring of grace, our Easter and our joy.

C **Amen.**

P Look, here is water!

C **Here is our water of life! Alleluia!**

Silence for reflection.

P Immersed in the promises of baptism, let us give thanks for what God has done for us. We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your voice thundered over the deep and water became the essence of life. Adam and Eve beheld Eden's verdant rivers. The ark carried your creation through the flood into a new day. Miriam led the dancing as your people passed through the sea into freedom's land. In a desert pool the Ethiopian official entered your boundless baptismal life. Look, here is water!

C **Here is our water of life! Alleluia!**

P At the river your beloved Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you opened the floodgates of your reconciling love, freeing us to live as Easter people. We rejoice with glad hearts, giving all honor and praise to you, through the risen Christ, our source of living water, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C Amen.

P Look, here is water!

C Here is our water of life! Alleluia!

GATHERING HYMN 389 *Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing*



1 Christ is a - live! Let Chris - tians sing. The cross stands
2 Christ is a - live! No long - er bound to dis - tant
3 In ev - 'ry in - sult, rift, and war, where col - or,
4 Wom - en and men, in age and youth, can feel the
5 Christ is a - live, and comes to bring good news to



emp - ty to the sky. Let streets and homes with
years in Pal - es - tine, but sav - ing, heal - ing,
scorn, or wealth di - vide, Christ suf - fers still, yet
Spir - it, hear the call, and find the way, the
this and ev - 'ry age, till earth and sky and



prais - es ring. Love, drowned in death, shall nev - er die.
here and now, and touch - ing ev - 'ry place and time.
loves the more, and lives, where e - ven hope has died.
life, the truth, re - vealed in Je - sus, freed for all.
o - cean ring with joy, with jus - tice, love, and praise.

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936
Music: TRURO, T. Williams. *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789
Text © 1975, rev. 1995 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

GREETING

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

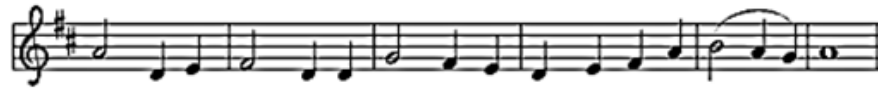
C And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb
who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich-es, wis - dom, and
strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.

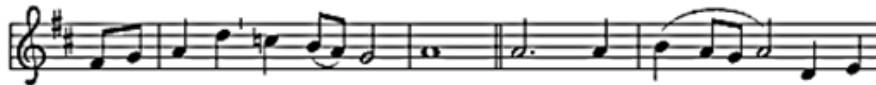
Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of
God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon - or,



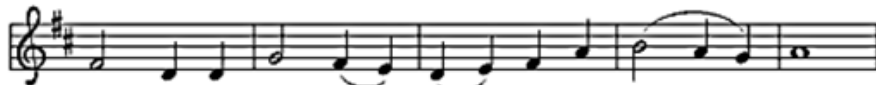
glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was



slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY



P Let us pray.

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

The assembly is seated.



+ WORD +

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

R The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: John 15:1-8

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.

P The holy gospel according to John, the fifteenth chapter.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON *We encounter the living word of God in the preaching.*

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY **690** *We Raise Our Hands to You, O Lord (hymn cannot be uploaded)*

APOSTLES' CREED

A Let us confess our faith.

C 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

Each petition ends: God of grace,

Congregational response: hear our prayer.

PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

We greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

The assembly is seated.



OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

ANTHEM "Christ is Alive" Wren/True

(Refrain)

Christ is alive, and goes before us
to show and share what love can do.
This is a day of new beginnings;
Our God is making all things new.

For by the life and death of Jesus,
love's mighty Spirit, now as then,
can make for us a world of difference
as faith and hope are born again. (Refrain)

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,
step from the past, and leave behind
our disappointment, guilt and grieving,
seeking new paths, and sure to find. (Refrain)

OFFERING HYMN ELW 870 (*versus 1*)

The assembly stands to sing the offering hymn as the collection and the gifts are brought forward.

We Praise You, O God



I We praise you, O God, our re - deem - er, cre - a - tor;
in grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.
We lay it be - fore you; we kneel and a - dore you;
we bless your ho - ly name; glad prais - es we sing.

Text: Julia C. Cory, 1882–1963
Music: KREMSER, A. Valerius, *Nederlandsch Gedenckclanck*, 1626

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin, who in dying has destroyed death, and in rising has brought us to eternal life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'HOLY, HOLY, HOLY'. It consists of four staves of music in a single system, all written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,'. The second staff continues with 'heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -'. The third staff continues with 'san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who'. The fourth and final staff concludes with 'comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.' The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some rests and phrasing slurs.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. 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.

The presiding minister continues to give thanks.

P In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread,
and gave thanks; broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying: Take and eat;
this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

C Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray.

C 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

P The risen Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread. Come and eat at God's table.

The assembly is seated.

LAMB OF GOD

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.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

As the ushers direct you, come to the altar using the side aisles and return to your seat via the central aisle. The assisting ministers offer both the common cup (wine) and a pouring cup (wine or grape juice). If you prefer to receive the wine or juice in an individual glass, take one from the tray as you approach the rail. Leave the empty glass on the rail. Wheat-free wafers are available--simply tell the pastor.

COMMUNION HYMNS	708	<i>Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love</i>
	477	<i>I Received the Living God</i>
	359	<i>Where Charity and Love Prevail</i>

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

Shepherding God, you have prepared a table before us and nourished us with your love. Send us forth from this banquet to proclaim your goodness and share the abundant mercy of Jesus, our redeemer and friend.

C **Amen.**

+ SENDING +

BLESSING *We receive the blessings of the triune God.*

P Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

P The God of resurrection power, the Christ of unending joy, and the Spirit of Easter hope ✝ bless you now and always.

C **Amen.**

The assembly stands.

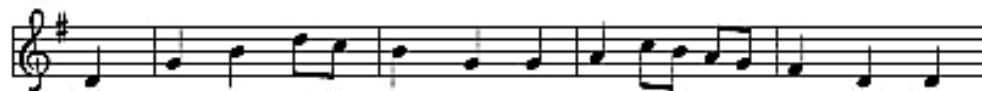
SENDING HYMN 881 *Let All Things Now Living*



1 Let all things now liv - ing a song of thanks - giv - ing to
2 God rules all the forc - es: the stars in their cours - es and



God the cre - a - tor tri - um - phant - ly raise,
sun in its or - bit o - be - dient - ly shine;



who fash - ioned and made us, pro - tect - ed and stayed us, who
the hills and the moun - tains, the riv - ers and foun - tains, the



still guides us on to the end of our days,
deeps of the o - cean pro - claim God di - vine.



God's ban - ners are o'er us, God's light goes be -
We too should be voic - ing our love and re -



fore us, a pil - lar of fire shin - ing forth in the night,
joic - ing; with glad ad - o - ra - tion a song let us raise



till shad - ows have van - ished and dark - ness is ban - ished, as
till all things now liv - ing u - nite in thanks - giv - ing: "To



for - ward we trav - el from light in - to light,
God in the high - est, ho - san - na and praise!"

Text: Katherine K. Davis, 1892-1980, alt.
Music: THE ASH GROVE, Welsh folk tune
Text © 1959, 1966 E. C. Schirmer Music Company.

DISMISSAL

A We believe out loud that God's mission for us is:

C to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.

A Alleluia! Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

C Thanks be to God!

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20220805.1416

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We dedicate today's altar flowers in gratitude
for Lori Zengel, our office manager,
who goes way above and beyond for all of us.

Calendar for April 28 - May 5

April	28	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Fifth Sunday of Easter
			11:30 am	Potluck
May	1	Wed.	7:00 p.m	Choir practice
	5	Sun.	9:00 am	Book study
			9:30 am	Choir practice
			10:00 am	Worship, Sixth Sunday of Easter

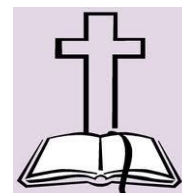
Next Sunday's Readings, Sixth Sunday of Easter:

[Acts 10:44-48](#)

[Psalm 98](#)

[1 John 5:1-6](#)

[John 15:9-17](#)



SERVING EVERY SUNDAY

Pastor Tom, presiding and preaching

Katharine Gossman, piano

Karl Barton, flute

Denise Bookwalter, announcements

Choir: Karl Barton, Melissa Barton, Mark Canning, Judi Duffy, Kirsten Ebbesen, Rita Ford, Martin Guttenplan, Vicki Guttenplan, Ron Hartung, Rudy Hehn, Susan Hehn, Colleen Holdcraft, Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Sandy Ness, Dave Suhrweir, Cassandra White

SERVING TODAY AND ONE WEEK FROM TODAY

Serving	April 28	May 5
Assisting Minister	Beth Alexander	Colleen Holdcraft
Cup Minister	Rob Schiffer	Rita Ford
Cantor	Rudy Hehn	Susan Hehn
Lector	Colleen Holdcraft	Karen Olson
Acolyte	Cup Minister - or Colton Allen or Graham Reece	
Tech Team	Colleen Holdcraft Jonas Holdcraft	Caroline Collins Mark Greeley
Ushers	Bob Eshleman Colin Hackley	Bob Eshleman Jan Harrison
Altar Guild	Rita Ford Susan Warren	
Counters	Margaret Bowers Patricia Handschy	Kirsten Ebbesen Rob Schiffer

PRAYER REQUESTS

New concerns: Phil Williams and family, mourning the passing of his mother, Gertrude Williams; Scott Simmons (son of Sharon Simmons) recovering from surgery for surgery for cancer; Jim Saxman (uncle of Rob Schiffer), undergoing treatment for throat cancer; Doris Michel (sister of Dave Suhrweir), recovering from gall bladder surgery; Sue Berent (sister of Sharon Simmons) for comfort and peace at end of life; Bob Eshleman, recovering from heart surgery; Gladys Kane for continued healing.

For the sick: Margarete Decker (mother of Caroline Collins); Sallie Robinson (wife of Erik Robinson); Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Dan Graney (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White); Laura McDuffie (sister of Rob Schiffer), diagnosed with primary immunodeficiency and Sjogren's syndrome.

In treatment for cancer: Phil Williams; Gordon Fleischer; Stephanie Barber; Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; James Sablan (brother of Donna Schiffer); Craig Timm (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Laura Ketchum-Jahn, (friend of Cheryl & Steve); Aubrey Thonvold (Reconciling Works Exec. Dir.); Judy Renwick (friend of Judi Duffy); Gil Johnson (friend of Judi Duffy); Amanda George (daughter-in-law of Rob Schiffer).

Health and protection: For all affected by the coronavirus – especially those experiencing mental-health difficulties due to isolation, those struggling to recover from the disease, those on the front lines fighting, researching and treating the disease (doctors, nurses, medical personnel, EMTs), the millions of unemployed people, etc.; for the unaccompanied children entering the U.S., including those “unaccounted for.”

For prisoners: All those on Death Row.

Other concerns: For Karen Olson; Kevin Robinson (son of Erik Robinson), in need of encouragement; Isaac (son of Terri Schmitt), for physical and emotional healing; Steve Michael (cousin of Rob Schiffer), in rehab after a serious accident.

Church concerns: St. Stephen's Church Council; the Florida-Bahamas Synod Council; all congregations searching for ways to stay connected and proclaim the Good News; Reconciling Works; Grace Lutheran Church; Bishop Pedro Suarez; Atonement Lutheran Church, Wesley Chapel, as they live into what it means to be Reconciling in Christ; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA Advocacy offices and ministry; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Pensacola.

World concerns: For all people suffering and/or recovering from hurricanes; migrants and asylum seekers; civil rights for people around the world; a ceasefire in Ethiopia and in Ukraine; peace in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FLOWER CHART FOR 2024: Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you would like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service by signing up for the 2024 Flower Chart located in the narthex. The cost is \$40, and you can place it in the offering plate.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: Want to read a sermon you missed? Visit <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to read the latest newsletters? Go to <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>. Want to browse a collection of St. Stephen songs? They're at <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/newsletters>.