

ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



May 2, 2021

10:00 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



+ GATHERING +

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

P Alleluia! Christ is risen

Congregation (C) Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

P Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P We thank you, risen Christ, for these waters where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever.

C Amen.



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
 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, *Psalmody Evangelica*, 1789
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GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion
 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. | Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb



who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.

Final refrain



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.



+ 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:

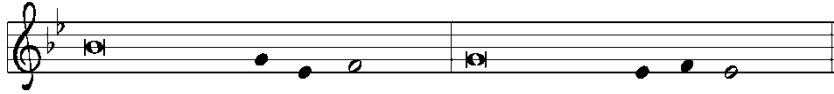
“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

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.

PSALM: Psalm 22:25-31 *We sing the psalm responsively.*



Leader ²⁵From you comes my praise in the | great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who | fear the LORD.

C ²⁶**The poor shall eat | and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts | live
forever!**

L ²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn | to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow | before God.

C ²⁸**For dominion belongs | to the LORD,
who rules o- | ver the nations.**

L ²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow | down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel be- | fore
the LORD.

C ³⁰**Their descendants shall | serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to genera- | tions to come.**

L ³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people | yet unborn,
saying to them, "The | LORD has acted!"

Spoken after the psalm is sung:

C **Amen.**

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of 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.

Reader The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

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.

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



1 Like the mur - mur of the dove's song, like the chal - lenge of her
 2 To the mem - bers of Christ's bod - y, to the branch - es of the
 3 With the heal - ing of di - vi - sion, with the cease - less voice of



flight, like the vig - or of the wind's rush, like the
 vine, to the church in faith as - sem - bled, to our
 prayer, with the pow'r to love and wit - ness, with the



new flame's ea - ger might: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.
 midst as gift and sign: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.
 peace be - yond com - pare: come, Ho - ly Spir - it, come.

Text: Carl P. Daw Jr., b. 1944

Music: BRIDEGROOM, Peter Cutts, b. 1937

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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.

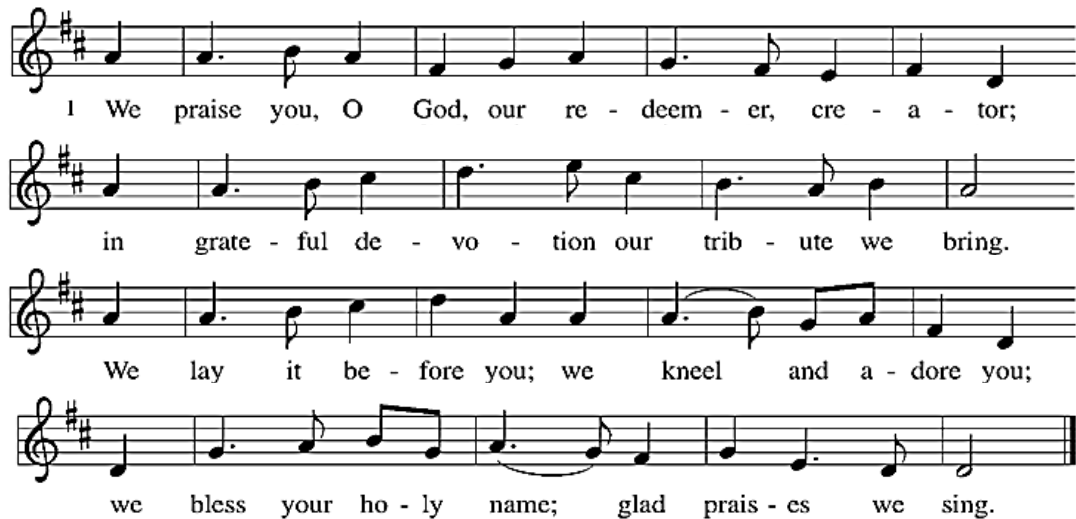
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Each petition ends: Hear us, O God.

Congregational response: Your mercy is great.

OFFERING HYMN 870 *We Praise You, O God (vs. 1)*



1 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.

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.

+ SENDING +

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

P May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING HYMN

845 *Voices Raised to You (vs. 1, 2, & 5)*

1 Voic - es raised to you we of - fer, tune them, God, for
 2 All cre - a - tion joins to praise you; earth and sky your
 3 Christ, the song of love in - car - nate, touch - ing earth with
 4 Spir - it, flam - ing through cre - a - tion, kin - dle faith with -
 5 How can an - y praise we of - fer mea - sure all the

songs of praise. Hearts and hands we bring in trib - ute
 works dis - play. Art and mu - sic, gifts you lend us,
 heav - en's grace, for your liv - ing, suf - f'ring, dy - ing,
 in each heart. Lift our voic - es high in cho - rus;
 thanks we owe? Take our hearts and hands and voic - es—

for your gifts through all our days. Al - le - lu - ia!
 we re - turn to you to - day. Al - le - lu - ia!
 for your ris - ing, hear our praise! Al - le - lu - ia!
 through our hands your love im - part. Al - le - lu - ia!
 gifts of love we can be - stow. Al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!
 Al - le - lu - ia! God, cre - a - tor, source of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, re - deem - er, Lord of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Spir - it, help - er, breath of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!

Text: Herman G. Stuenkel Jr., b. 1923
 Music: SONG OF PRAISE, Carolyn Jennings, b. 1936
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DISMISSAL

P 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.**

P Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

C **Thanks be to God.**

+ + +

Sundays and Seasons v.20200805.1416

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**FLOWERS ARE GIVEN
TO THE GLORY OF GOD
BY SUSAN WARREN IN MEMORIAL
TO HER MOM, DAD, AND BROTHER.**

Calendar for May 2 - 9

May	02	Sun.	10:00 a.m.	Worship (online), Fifth Sunday of Easter
			11:30 a.m.	Congregational picnic
	05	Wed.	Noon	Bible study (online)
	09	Sun.	10:00 am	Worship (online), Sixth Sunday of Easter

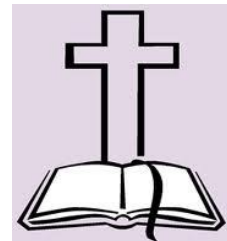
Next Sunday’s Readings, Sixth Sunday of Easter:

[Acts 10:44-48](#)

[Psalm 98](#)

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

[John 15:9-17](#)



PRAYER REQUESTS

New concerns: Barb ODonnell, recovering from foot surgery.

For the sick: Val Sullivan; Margarete Decker (mother of Caroline Collins); Don Dowd; Isabelle Taylor (granddaughter of Bill & Connie Taylor); being treated for rheumatoid arthritis and Primary Immunodeficiency; Theresa Martin (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Dan Graney (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Jamie Ann Meyers (friend of Cheryl Stuart); Sarah (friend of Cassandra White); Gerhard Hofer (brother-in-law of Ridy Hofer).

In treatment for cancer: Stephanie Barber; Cathie Nitti (niece of Sharon Simmons); Jenny (niece of Laura Sullivan & Colin Hackley); Rosalinda Wright; Maggie Soff (friend of Sandy Sampson); James Sablan (brother of Donna Schiffer); Isabell Cintron (friend of Sharon Simmons); Sarah Lucas (friend of Cassandra White); Bruce Blubaum (cousin of Sharon Simmons); Chris Dickman (synod councilmember); child of Pr. Katrina Foster (friend of Cheryl).

For health and protection: For all affected by coronavirus: those experiencing mental health difficulties due to isolation; those with the disease struggling to recover; those on the front lines fighting, researching and treating the disease (doctors, nurses, medical personal, EMTs, the millions of unemployed people, etc.; for the unaccompanied children entering the US, including those “unaccounted for”.

For prisoners: Femi and Eddie; all those on death row.

Other concerns: Karen Olson; Blanche White (Melissa Barton).

Church concerns: St. Stephen’s Congregational 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; Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; Our Savior Lutheran Church in Freeport, Bahamas; the ELCA Advocacy offices and ministry; St. Paul Lutheran Church, Pensacola.

World concerns: For all recovering in the Florida Panhandle from Hurricane Michael, including Messiah Lutheran Church; the people of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands continuing to recover from hurricanes; migrants fleeing violence in Central America; all those migrants and asylum seekers imprisoned by the US government; the people of Venezuela (birthplace of Bp. Suarez) and Hong Kong; for the Supreme Court as it considers cases involving the LGBTQ community.