

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



Ascension of Our Lord
May 16, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! We continue to do our best in providing the safest environment possible for you to worship our Risen Lord with your whole heart, even during these COVID-19 times. Here are the precautions we are taking on behalf of our whole community of faith, so that we best care for one another and those we are around during the week.

- We ask you wear a mask the entire time you are in the building, unless you have a medical condition preventing you from doing so.
- Bulletins and individual Communion elements are available for you to pick up as you enter from the back of the sanctuary. The Communion elements are available in wine and grape juice form as well as wheat and gluten-free wafers. We will partake of the body and blood of Christ together from our respective seats.
- There will not be a separate time for an offering to be collected for supporting our congregational and wider-church ministry, and so an offering basket is placed beside the bulletins and Communion elements, for those who wish to give this day.
- We are asking you to refrain from singing, as we do our best to minimize the spread of droplets and aerosols around our masks. You may do so in your heart, where we believe God hears just as well as if spoken or sung aloud. We, also, ask that you continue participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print, but doing so in a whisper voice.
- There will not be a time for sharing of the peace, but we encourage you to do so with one another before or after the worship (while maintaining the physical distancing recommendations of six feet).

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we will always err on the side of caution while knowing that we can still transmit the virus even with the full vaccination.

Ascension of Our Lord

In today's readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples are told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

Prelude *Prelude on "Deo Gracias"* (PORTMAN)

*Thanksgiving for Baptism

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at our baptism, remembering our everlasting bond with our Risen Lord.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

We thank you, risen Christ,
for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.
We praise you, Holy Spirit,
for coming to us in these 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 of serenity
on your whole church when we hide in fear.
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.
Send us as loving companions on our journey
as we share your new life among us.
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.
Amen.

Text: Bede, 673-735; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*

- 1 A hymn of glory let us sing!
New hymns throughout the world shall ring:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Christ, by a road before untrod,
ascends unto the throne of God.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
- 2 The holy apostolic band
upon the Mount of Olives stand,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
and with his faithful foll'wers see
their Lord ascend in majesty.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
- 3 To whom the shining angels cry,
"Why stand and gaze upon the sky?"
Alleluia! Alleluia!
"This is the Savior!" thus they say,
"this is his glorious triumph day!"
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
- 4 "You see him now, ascending high
up to the portals of the sky."
Alleluia! Alleluia!
"Hereafter Jesus you shall see
returning in great majesty."
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

5 O risen Christ, ascended Lord,
all praise to you let earth accord:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
You are, while endless ages run,
with Father and with Spirit one.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your blessed Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things. Mercifully give us faith to trust that, as he promised, he abides with us on earth to the end of time, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Lesson

Acts 1:1-11

Before he is lifted into heaven, Jesus promises that the missionary work of the disciples will spread out from Jerusalem to all the world, and that the disciples will be accompanied and empowered by the Holy Spirit. His words provide an outline of Acts.

[Luke writes:] ¹In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

¹Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to God with a joyful sound.

²**For the Lord Most High is to be feared:
a great king over all the earth,**

³who subdues the peoples under us,
and the nations under our feet;

⁴**who chooses our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom God loves.**

⁵God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of the ram's horn.

⁶**Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our king, sing praises.**

⁷For God is king of all the earth;
sing praises with a song.

⁸**God reigns over the nations;
God is enthroned on high.**

⁹The nobles of the peoples have gathered as the people of the God of Abraham.
The rulers of the earth belong to God, who is highly exalted.

Second Lesson

Ephesians 1:15-23

The risen and exalted Christ reigns over the entire universe. The author of Ephesians prays that we are given the wisdom to know the power of the risen Christ and the empowering hope that the knowledge of this inheritance provides.

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

*Gospel

Luke 24:44-53

On the day of his ascension, Jesus leaves his disciples with a commission, a blessing, and a promise of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁴[Jesus said to the eleven and those with them,] “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Borning Cry*

#732

Text: John C. Ylvisaker, b. 1937

- 1 “I was there to hear your borning cry,
I’ll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized
to see your life unfold.
I was there when you were but a child,
with a faith to suit you well;
in a blaze of light you wandered off
to find where demons dwell.”
- 2 “When you heard the wonder of the Word
I was there to cheer you on;
you were raised to praise the living Lord,
to whom you now belong.
If you find someone to share your time
and you join your hearts as one,
I’ll be there to make your verses rhyme
from dusk till rising sun.”
- 3 “In the middle ages of your life,
not too old, no longer young,
I’ll be there to guide you through the night,
complete what I’ve begun.
When the evening gently closes in
and you shut your weary eyes,
I’ll be there as I have always been,
with just one more surprise.”
- 4 “I was there to hear your borning cry,
I’ll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized
to see your life unfold.”

*Prayers of Intercession

On this fortieth day of Easter, let us join one another in prayer, responding to each petition with the words, “be with us in power and mercy.”

A brief silence.

Universal Lord, you call the whole church to worship you. Empower us all to be joyful witnesses to your love made known in Jesus Christ. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

You have fashioned a habitat for all your creatures and you fill the earth with your glory. Give rain where it is needed and rescue those inundated by floods. Mend what we have torn in the fabric of creation and replenish and nourish your world. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

In the majesty of your love, you rule the world with justice and mercy. Give those in authority a spirit of compassion, so that all who are hungry and poor receive food and resources, and all people flourish and live in peace. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

You heal those who are sick and bind up the brokenhearted. Attend to the cares and needs of the hurting: that those with coronavirus be healed, that physicians and nurses be supported, that the vaccines be shared around the globe, and that future waves of the pandemic be averted. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

You have gathered us in this Covenant family, enlightened our hearts, and given us a share of the immeasurable greatness of your power. Help us love one another and share the riches of your grace with our neighbors. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

In raising Christ from the dead, you put your great power to work in the world. Raise us and all who have died in the faith with Christ. We remember saints in our lives, and we thank you for their gifts shared among us. O God, **be with us in power and mercy.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy, living, and loving God,
we praise you for creating the heavens and the earth.
We bless you for bringing Noah and his family through the waters of the flood,
for freeing your people Israel from the bonds of slavery,
and for sending your Son to be our Redeemer.

We give you thanks for Jesus
who, living among us,
healed the sick, fed the hungry,
and with a love stronger than death,
gave his life for others.

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.

Remembering, therefore,
his life-giving death and glorious resurrection,
we await your promised life for all this dying world.

Holy Spirit, breathe on us and on this bread and cup:
carry us in your arms from death to life,
that we may live as your disciples,
clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever. **Amen.**

**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.**

Communion

Music Interlude *A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing* (SEWELL)

Prayer after Communion

Wellspring of joy,
through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts.
Satisfy the hunger still around us,
and send us as joyful witnesses,
that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

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.
Amen.

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936

- 1 Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna!
Celebrate this day of days!
Christ is risen! Hush in wonder:
all creation is amazed.
In the desert all surrounding,
see, a spreading tree has grown.
Healing leaves of grace abounding
bring a taste of love unknown.
- 2 Christ is risen! Raise your spirits
from the caverns of despair.
Walk with gladness in the morning.
See what love can do and dare.
Drink the wine of resurrection,
not a servant, but a friend.
Jesus is our strong companion.
Joy and peace shall never end.
- 3 Christ is risen! Earth and heaven
nevermore shall be the same.
Break the bread of new creation
where the world is still in pain.
Tell its grim, demonic chorus:
“Christ is risen! Get you gone!”
God the First and Last is with us.
Sing Hosanna, ev’ryone!

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Postlude *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* (HAYES)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Alex Hohenstein, Judy Jones, Matt Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 5/9/2021: \$517

Ascension: The Great Day of Christian Honesty

I continue to hold to the idea of Ascension as the one day we sit with the reality that Jesus isn't here the way we would like him to be, specifically in the kind of physical way that allows us to ask him direct questions and hear his answer. But I believe Ascension is perhaps one of the most Jesus-y things Jesus does. He leaves because it's time for us to do the work. And we would never have taken on that responsibility as long as he was there to do it for us. So I still believe Ascension is the Great Day of Honesty, and I also believe it is the Great Day of Christian Maturity, because we learn we've gotta do this thing, and also that we CAN.

And yes, this does have a direct correlation to original blessing, because what Jesus does for us on Ascension is very much like what God does for Adam and Eve in sending them out from the Garden. We are sent onto the next step of our journey. We are loved, we are equipped, and we are sent. **Ready or not, here life comes.**

Ascension:

If Jesus is making a way for us, are we following it?

There are some stories in Scripture that veer into what I call “Fringe” territory; unknown, supernatural stuff we don’t have names for except to say they are strange, and we don’t know what to make of them. Welcome to the ascension, where that kind of thing happens.

In our reading from Acts, the disciples first ask Jesus whether it’s time for the kingdom to be restored. They’re like little kids on a long car ride, constantly asking, “Are we there yet?” Jesus gives his usual answer- it’s not for them to know- but he says the Spirit is coming to help them, and they will be his witnesses to the end of the earth. And then...drumroll please...Jesus is lifted up in a cloud and disappears from sight. (Wha???) The disciples find themselves obviously gazing up at this incredible scene, when two white-robed men then appear (Wha???) and ask them, “Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?”

Dear robed guys who appear out of nowhere, WE WERE WATCHING JESUS FLOAT AWAY IN A CLOUD IS WHY.

(I mean really, the fact that the disciples are intently watching this happen is the very least crazy, the very most rational thing going on around here.)

Moving on...the robed guys also tell the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way they saw him leave. And then the disciples return to Jerusalem, to the upstairs room, with no further commentary. (Wha???)

The Great Day of Honesty

I confess to being rather obsessed with the whole idea of the ascension. How do we understand Jesus’ absence? Why does nobody talk about it? What does it all mean, anyway? I’ve begun a little campaign in recent years to call Ascension the Great Day of Honesty, where we all admit out loud that Jesus isn’t here, and we all wish he were, because most of the time we have no idea what we are doing. It hasn’t caught on yet. Maybe that’s because it’s too hard for us to say, and we’d rather say things like “Jesus is near to us in our hearts.” I personally think one day of honestly staring that truth in the face might do all of us a bit of good. It certainly makes you feel a lot more responsible, the truth that Jesus expects us—US—to hold down the fort. There’s only one catch- if we’re going to be true to the way the story unfolds, the Great Day of Honesty shouldn’t lead us to despair or resignation.

Do Not Despair

In fact, what happens to the disciples is just the opposite. They go back to their beloved upper room and constantly devote themselves to prayer. And soon, Pentecost happens just like Jesus promised, and they find themselves out on the street, prophesying and spreading good news to the ends of the earth. This is no late night ice-cream bingeing depression. They are just fine moving forward without Jesus. So perhaps the strangest question is this: Why aren't the disciples more bothered when Jesus leaves them?

Personally, (and with a little help from Jurgen Moltmann) I think it's because the disciples see Jesus not as removed from them, but ahead of them. Jesus is preparing a way for them, and for us, and our job is to go forward, to venture out in that direction.

Who would have thought that the hardest question about ascension wouldn't be about the cloud, or the white-robed men, or even Jesus' cryptic words about the time of kingdom restoration. The hardest question is staring right at us, demanding an answer: If Jesus is making a way for us, are we following it? Perhaps that is its own great day of honesty worth heeding.

Danielle Shroyer is the author of Original Blessing: Putting Sin in its Rightful Place (Fortress Press, 2016), Where Jesus Prayed: Illuminations on the Lord's Prayer in the Holy Land (Paraclete Press, 2016), and The Boundary-Breaking God: An Unfolding Story of Hope and Promise (Jossey-Bass, 2009). She is a contributor to the Common English Bible Women's Edition (2016), and Faith of Our Mothers, Living Still (2017), an overview of the history of women at Princeton Theological Seminary. She has been featured in magazines such as The Christian Century and a number of podcasts and radio shows, including Minnesota Public Radio.

The Ascension of Jesus

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. Luke 24:51 (NIV)

Based on Luke 24:44-53



B T Q O M D Q S U F F E R U F
F N C Q W O P S A L M S T S A
G X N Q O F S M Z Z H N U C O
B B Y C R O T E C M E T N R J
R A P R S R S P S P F E C I A
N I G Y H G U P E G K D L P S
Z F S F I I M R N A N W D T P
B J Z E P V F S T A Y E E U O
X L K R E E G J T Q L H J R H
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A X A B D I L P E U V V N O R
D E C N K U N P L F J S D Q S
H R U I F H O G G V Y K S L C

RISE
SUFFER
HEAVEN
WORSHIPED

REPENT
PSALMS
SCRIPTURE
BLESSING

PROPHETS
OPENED
FULFILLED
UNDERSTAND

TAKEN
FORGIVE
MOSES
MINDS