

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



*Third Sunday after Pentecost
June 13, 2021*



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! As long as the weather cooperates, we gather outside in God's Creation so that we may more safely come together and worship with singing and loud shouts of praise.

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the side driveway. Please keep in mind potential wind that may affect your Communion cups.
- You may stay in your vehicle or setup a chair anywhere you like. Speakers will be set up front by the worship leaders so that everyone can hear and participate from their respective spots.
- It is your choice whether you wear a mask or not, as well as how much distance you wish to keep from others. We are mindful of everyone's varying comfort levels with what we hope to be improving circumstances with COVID-19.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- You will not be asked to stand during the worship, so feel free to remain seated throughout.
- An offering basket is placed up-front by the podium.

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers
Presiding Minister
Pianist
Lector
Flute
Parish Administrator
Custodian

All People
The Rev. Bradley Ross
Robin Crawford
Marie Zahn
Ann Droste
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Vince Besednjak

*The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
19000 Libby Rd.*

Maple Heights, OH 44137

Phone: 216-662-0370

Email: covenantlc@sbcglobal.net

Third Sunday after Pentecost

The mustard seed becomes a great shrub that shelters the birds, recalling ancient images of the tree of life. We'd expect a cedar or a sequoia, but Jesus finds the power of God better imaged in a tiny, no-account seed. It's not the way we expect divine activity to look. Yet the tree of life is here, in the cross around which we gather, the tree into which we are grafted through baptism, the true vine that nourishes us with its fruit in the cup we share. It may not appear all that impressive, but while nobody's looking it grows with a power beyond our understanding.

Prelude *Light Dawns on a Weary World* (HANSEN)

Confession & Forgiveness

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

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the God of manna,
the God of miracles,
the God of mercy.

Amen!

Drawn to Christ and seeking God's abundance,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our provider,

help us.

It is hard to believe there is enough to share.

**We question your ways when they differ
from the ways of the world in which we live.**

**We turn to our own understanding
rather than trusting in you.**

**Share with us the words of eternal life
and feed us for life in the world.**

Amen.

Beloved people of God:
 in Jesus, the manna from heaven,
 you are fed and nourished.
 By Jesus, the worker of miracles,
 there is always more than enough.
 Through Jesus, † the bread of life,
 you are shown God's mercy:
 you are forgiven and loved into abundant life.
Amen!

Gathering Hymn *We Walk by Faith*

#635



1 We walk by faith and not by sight; with
 2 We may not touch your hands and side, nor
 3 Help then, O Lord, our un - be - lief; and
 4 For you, O res - ur - rec - ted Lord, are
 5 And when our life of faith is done, in



gra - cious words draw near, O Christ, who spoke as
 fol - low where you trod; but in your prom - ise
 may our faith a - bound to call on you when
 found in means di - vine: be - neath the wa - ter
 realms of clear - er light may we be - hold you



none e'er spoke: "My peace be with you here."
 we re - joice, and cry, "My Lord and God!"
 you are near and seek where you are found:
 and the word, be - neath the bread and wine.
 as you are, with full and end - less sight.

Text: Henry Alford, 1810–1871, alt.
 Music: SHANTI, Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Prayer of the Day

O God, you are the tree of life, offering shelter to all the world. Graft us into yourself and nurture our growth, that we may bear your truth and love to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

First Lesson

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Tree imagery is used in a messianic prophecy to tell how the Lord will choose someone from Judah's royal family (the cedar tree) to reign over all creation. This tree will be planted on Mount Zion, the location of the holy temple.

²²Thus says the Lord God:

I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;
I will set it out.

I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;
I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.

²³On the mountain height of Israel
I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.

²⁴All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the Lord.

I bring low the high tree,
I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree
and make the dry tree flourish.

I the Lord have spoken;
I will accomplish it.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

¹It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High;

²**to herald your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night;**

³on the psaltery, and on the lyre,
and to the melody of the harp.

⁴**For you have made me glad by your acts, O Lord;
and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.**

¹²The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

¹³**Those who are planted in the house of the Lord
shall flourish in the courts of our God;**

¹⁴they shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be green and succulent;

¹⁵**that they may show how upright the Lord is,
my rock, in whom there is no injustice.**

Second Lesson

2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God's new creation.

⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

Gospel

Mark 4:26-34

Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God's kingdom.

The Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord!

²⁶[Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

³⁰He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Light Dawns on a Weary World*

#726



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea - tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a



wea - ry world: the prom - ised day of jus - tice comes.
wea - ry world: the prom - ised feast of plen - ty comes.
wea - ry world: the prom - ised green of E - den comes.



Refrain

The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun - tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won - der ech - oes sha - lom.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us unite before God in prayer, responding to each petition with the words, “Grant us your life.”

A brief silence.

Holy God, Fount of blessings, strengthen your whole church: that the seeds of faith which you plant take root and grow; that congregations that are emerging from the pandemic re-gather in safety; and that you bless your children in Ethiopia and other places that are experiencing great distress. O Giver of all goodness, **grant us your life.**

Continue to nourish your creation: that the trees and plantings in national forests be protected; that farms around the globe be safeguarded from drought, flood, and pestilence; and that wild animals thrive in the habitat they need. O Giver of all goodness, **grant us your life.**

Watch over all the nations: that world leaders care for those in greatest need; that all prejudices cease; that the might of hate be halted; that the displaced find a welcome homeland; and that peace reign between all peoples. O Giver of all goodness, **grant us your life.**

We long for health and wholeness: for countries where COVID-19 is accelerating and vaccines are not available; for relief agencies, that the hungry be fed; for those who are beaten down by poverty and homelessness; for those who are suffering from climate disasters; for any who are sick, including those with no access to medical care. O Giver of all goodness, **grant us your life.**

For all who have died in the faith, and for those whom we remember here before you, we offer our thanks, gracious Redeemer. For all who will die today, we ask your mercy. And at the end, that we join with all your people in the perfection of your presence. O Giver of all goodness, **grant us your life.**

To you we pray, O God, our Source, Sovereign, and Strength, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy God,
our Maker, Redeemer, and Healer,
in the harmonious world of your creation,
the plants and animals, the seas and stars
were whole and well in your praise.

When sin had scarred the world,
you sent your Son to heal our ills
and to form us again into one.

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 acts of healing, his body given up,
and his victory over death,
we await that day when all the peoples of the earth
will come to the river to enjoy the tree of life.

Holy Spirit, bless us through this meal:
as grains scattered on the hillside become one bread,
so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth,
that all may be fed with the Bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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 *Amazing Grace* (HOLCOMB)

Ann Droste, Flute

Prayer after Communion

Jesus, Bread of life,
we have received from your table
more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray.
Amen!

Blessing

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever!
Amen!

Sending Hymn *For the Fruit of All Creation*

#679



1 For the fruit of all cre - a - tion, thanks be to God.
2 In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will is done.
3 For the har - vests of the Spir - it, thanks be to God.



For these gifts to ev - 'ry na - tion, thanks be to God.
In the help we give our neigh - bor, God's will is done.
For the good we all in - her - it, thanks be to God.



For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing, si - lent growth while we are sleep - ing,
In our world - wide task of car - ing for the hun - gry and de - spair - ing,
For the won - ders that as - tound us, for the truths that still con - found us,



fu - ture needs in earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.
in the har - vests we are shar - ing, God's will is done.
most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
Music: AR HYD Y NOS, Welsh traditional

Dismissal

Go in peace. You are the body of Christ!
Thanks be to God!

Postlude *Praise Him! Praise Him!* (FRITCHIE)

Ann Droste, Flute

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Matt Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Heather Lasher, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Robert Ridgell, 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 6/6/2021: \$3,477.50



For our latest video recordings of worship, bulletins, newsletters, as well as links to daily devotions and other resources, please visit: covenantmaplehts.org.

Check us out on Facebook for the latest updates for community activities and a dose of Good News on your news feed!



Lectionary Blog: The Spirit is Always Working

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Psalm 20;
2 Corinthians 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34

The Lectionary Blog is based off the semicontinuous reading option for the lectionary, so the first reading and psalm are different than what we use in worship.

This week's Hebrew Bible passage tells the story of God choosing a king after Saul's fall from grace. Saul was physically huge and the most attractive man in Israel (1 Samuel 9:2). He looked the part of a king, to be sure. But when God gave him specific orders, he second-guessed them, to near catastrophe for his people centuries later (Esther 3:5-6). For this reason, Saul was abandoned by the Spirit of the Lord, who had previously been with him (1 Samuel 16:14).

Samuel had been Saul's friend and confidant up to that point. While he also abandoned Saul, he grieved for his friend's punishment (1 Samuel 15:35). God also felt sorry that Saul had been made king over Israel. But then God roused both Godself and Samuel out of mourning (1 Samuel 16:1) and set to work picking a new king.

The men of Bethlehem, being associated with the disfavored king, were terrified to see Samuel coming. They only relaxed after he confirmed that he was coming in peace. Crucially, Samuel told them to make themselves holy, while he set to the task of making Jesse and his sons holy. I'm not exactly sure what this means, but it sets the stage for a sacrifice and some performance, which is going to be out of the ordinary and probably strange in the people's eyes (which is what "holy" means after all—"weird" or "strange").

Samuel regarded Jesse's sons as they passed before him, thinking that Elaiiv, who was apparently physically impressive like Saul, must surely be the new anointed one (1 Samuel 16:6). But God responded that, while humans look at the outside of a person, God considers the heart. All of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel and were passed over in turn.

Finally the youngest, who apparently looked a bit strange, passed in front of Samuel. He had red skin (or more likely red hair—1 Samuel 16:12 and Genesis 25:25), beautiful eyes and was very pretty (1 Samuel 16:12). This boy seemed a bit too gorgeous to be considered kingly. If we imagine that David had the look of a physically impressive, masculine king, we miss the point of the passage, especially 1 Samuel 16:7. Saul and

Eliav weren't exactly hard on the eyes, but David seems to have been embarrassingly attractive, and not in a stereotypically masculine way. But apparently this pretty boy was exactly what God wanted. God told Samuel to rise up and anoint David. And from that day, the Spirit of the Lord rested on him.

Skipping ahead to Jesus' parable, we are told that the kingdom of heaven is like a seed planted in a field. Without further intervention from the farmer, the seed germinates and grows, producing stalk, head and individual grains. Then as soon as the grain is mature, it is cut and harvested.

This is an apt parable for thinking about the kingship during the prophethood of Samuel. God's Spirit picked Saul because he looked like a leader (1 Samuel 9:2, 10:24). But when he failed to live up to his promise, God felt sorry. But then God immediately set out to anoint a new king. The Spirit led Samuel to anoint a red-haired boy with beautiful eyes, not a rugged-looking manly man. We aren't told anything about David's height, ever, unlike Saul who was a head taller than everyone in Israel. What we do know is that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14): a lover, a poet and a warrior.

Just because God felt grieved by a terrible, idolatrous, disobedient leader doesn't mean that the Spirit stopped working. Like a seed, God's spirit-filled kingdom is planting, growing, harvesting and replanting all the time, even when everything around seems horrible and disappointing. Sometimes people who look like traditional, patriarchal leaders disappoint by making great shows of devotion but not actually obeying God's word.

The great news is that God raises up those who may seem inappropriate choices to the world, or the opposite of a macho leader, to make a point that God's concern is not with outside appearances but with obedient hearts that will press on in doing the work of God's Spirit.

Cory Driver is the director of both the Transformational Leadership Academy of the Indiana-Kentucky Synod and the Southern Ohio Synod's Leadership Academy. His book on wilderness spirituality, Life Unsettled, is available from Fortress Press. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."
Mark 4:30-32 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Mark 4:30-32



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

BIRDS	SHADE	NEST	MUSTARD	BRANCHES
JESUS	GARDEN	PLANTED	LARGEST	PLANTS
STORY	GROUND	SEED	SMALLEST	KINGDOM