**The Lutheran Church of the Covenant**

“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”

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*Ascension of Our Lord*

*May 21, 2023*



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

* Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
* Portions marked with \* are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
* We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
* There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
* We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God’s love is meant for the world to enjoy!

***Our Worship Leaders & Staff***

Ministers All People

Presiding Minister The Rev. Bradley Ross

Organist Aaron Carter-Enyi

Lector Harry Werner

Parish Administrator Jennifer Lasher-Dobush

Custodian Vince Besednjak

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**Ascension of Our Lord**

*In today’s readings, the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Holy Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples were 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 Holy Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.*

Prelude

Welcome & Greetings

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

**Christ is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

\*Thanksgiving for Baptism

*We praise God for the gift of baptism that forever unites us through God’s love with one another, and sets us free to serve as disciples for the sake of the world.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

by whose hand we are given new birth,

by whose speaking we are given new life.

**Amen!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,

we are welcomed, restored, and supported

as children of the new creation.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Holy God, holy and merciful, holy and mighty,

you are the river of life,

you are the everlasting wellspring.

In mercy and might you have freed us from death

and raised us with Jesus, our resurrection and the life.

In baptismal waters, our old life is washed away,

and in them we are born anew.

Glory to you for oceans and lakes,

for rivers and streams.

Honor to you for waters that wash us clean,

quench our thirst, and nurture both crops and creatures.

Praise to you for the life-giving water of baptism,

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of the new creation.

Satisfy the world’s need through this living water.

Where drought dries the earth, bring refreshment.

Where despair prevails, grant hope.

Where chaos reigns, bring peace.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,

who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns forever.

**Amen!**

\*Gathering Hymn  *All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!* ELW #634

\*Greeting

The grace of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you.**

Hymn of Praise *This is the Feast*  ELW pg. 101

Prayer of the Day

O God of majesty, your Son Jesus Christ ascended to your right hand, and yet continues to live in us. Further unite us with Christ and each other in suffering and in joy, that all the world may be drawn into your bountiful presence, through Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior and Lord, 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. His words provide an outline of the book 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!**

Psalm Psalm 47

*The bold verses are sung by the congregation using the tone below:*

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Antiphon: *God has gone up with a shout.*(Ps. 47:5)

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 un- **|** der our feet;  
 4**who chooses our inheri- | tance for us,**  
  **the pride of Jacob, | whom God loves.**  *Antiphon* 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.**  *Antiphon*  
 7For God is king of **|** all the earth;  
  sing praises **|** with a song.  
 8**God reigns o- | ver the nations;**  
  **God is en- | throned 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 high- **|** ly exalted.  *Antiphon*

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 Acclamation



\*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.

The Gospel according to Luke, the 24th chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord!**

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.”45Then 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  *A Hymn of Glory, Let Us Sing!* Vs, 1, 3, 5 & 6  ELW #393

\*Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,**

**the Father, the Almighty,**

**maker of heaven and earth,**

**of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

**the only Son of God,**

**eternally begotten of the Father,**

**God from God, Light from Light,**

**true God from true God,**

**begotten, not made,**

**of one Being with the Father;**

**through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation**

**he came down from heaven,**

**was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary**

**and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;**

**he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again**

**in accordance with the scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,**

**and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,**

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,**

**who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,**

**who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,**

**and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

\* Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Ever-present God, further root your entire church firmly in you, including for our Covenant family. Let us neither become entranced staring up into the heavens, nor distraught by the suffering of the world. Teach us to see you in every face, every place, and every moment. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of the cosmos, you cradle creation in your loving arms and anoint it with signs of your presence. In the budding of flowers and the formations of the land and sky, reveal your abundant life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, your reign is above us, around us, beneath us, and beside us. As you rule the cosmos with justice and mercy, pour out your compassion upon those in authority, that they serve humbly and justly. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of companionship, provide clarity and direction for those experiencing life transitions—in births and deaths, new employment and new relationships, divorces and departures. We lift up those receiving new diagnoses or undergoing treatment for illness or injury. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of welcome, you call us to feast at your eternal banquet. We give thanks for those who came before us, whose lives witnessed to your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ’s resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. **Amen!**

\*Sharing of the Peace

The peace of the risen Christ be with you always! **And also with you.**

Music Interlude

\*Great Thanksgiving

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It is indeed our delight,

that we give thanks and praise to you,

loving and gracious God,

for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ,

who enthroned forever at your right hand,

and yet, lives with us forever.

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:

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\*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 world you still adore.

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 everlasting grace 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.**

\*Invitation to Communion

Taste and see the joy of new life for us all!

**Thanks be to God!**

Communion

Music Interlude

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God,

in you we live and move and have our being.

With your word and this meal of grace,

you have nourished our life together.

Strengthen us to show your love

and serve the world in Jesus’ name.

**Amen!**

\*Blessing

The God of all,

who raised ☩ Jesus from the dead,

bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit

to live in the new creation.

**Amen!**

\*Sending Hymn *Lord, You Give the Great Commission* Vs. 1, 4 & 5ELW #579

\*Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

**Christ is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Serve the Risen Christ!

**Thanks be to God!**

Postlude

Praying Together

**... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating:** Gayle Agg, Sheena Cameron, Joan Clarke, Christina Copeland, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Jane Gradert, Dylan King, Elaine Knerem, Jason Lanese, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Welker, Maud Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Shannon Meskill, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family, Karla & Drew Perry at the death of Drew’s father Doyle Perry.

**LAST WEEK**

General Fund receipts for week ending 5/14/2023: $2083.05

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We hope you can join us today, immediately following the worship downstairs in our fellowship hall, as we hear the latest updates about our ministry at Covenant!

Ascension of Our Lord

The evangelist Luke narrates a literal ascension of Christ into the heavens taking place forty days after the resurrection, and the church has adopted this chronology for its festival calendar. Some Christians transfer this festival from the Thursday to the following Sunday. Since only Luke narrated an ascension, two readings on this day come from his pen.

The Readings in the Bible

Luke 24:44-53

The Gospel of Luke concludes with the commissioning of the disciples and the literal ascension of the risen Christ from the earth to God in heaven, both occurring at Easter. The book of 2 Kings had narrated the ascension of Elijah to heaven. Invoking a cosmology that was to educated persons already archaic in his time, Luke uses the term “heaven” to suggest a spatial realm above the flat earth inhabited by God and the angels.

Acts 1:1-11

Luke began his second volume by telling with different details the narrative that concluded his first volume. In this version, Luke introduced the biblical imagery of forty days to indicate a time pregnant with religious power, Jesus sends the apostles out “to the ends of the earth,” and angelic figures appear. The narrative indicates the Holy Spirit’s continuing presence in the church.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians, a late first-century general letter written under the name of Paul, perhaps to the church in Ephesus, relies on some non-Pauline terms and themes in its opening prayer, which refers to Christ seated at God’s right hand “in the heavenly places.” In contrast to Paul, who described the church as Christ’s body, Ephesians depicts Christ as the head of a body, which is the church.

