

As We Gather: In one of His several “I am” statements, Jesus says, “I am the vine. You are the branches.” Inviting His hearers to a place of rest and refuge, He says, “Abide in Me.” In the Epistle, John correlates confessing that Jesus is the Son of God with experiencing and coming to trust in the love God has for us. Abiding in Jesus means abiding in God’s love. And God Himself abides in us. This relationship of abiding in Jesus, who Himself is love, was experienced by the Ethiopian eunuch when Philip told him the Good News about Jesus and the Ethiopian was baptized.

Greeting

P The Lord be with you. **C** And also with you.

✠ Confession and Absolution ✠

Hymn of Invocation “Christ, the Word of God Incarnate” #540 (G)

Invocation, Confession of Sins and Absolution Pages 213-214

✠ Service of The Word ✠

Introit *Psalm 145:1–2, 8, 10, 21; antiphon: St. John 16:16*

P A little while, and you will see me no longer;
C and again a little while, and you will see me.

P I will extol you, my God and King,
C and bless your name forever and ever.

P Every day I will bless you
C and praise your name forever and ever.

P The LORD is gracious and merciful,
C slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

P All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
C and all your saints shall bless you!

P My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
C and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

All **Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P A little while, and you will see me no longer;
C and again a little while, and you will see me.

Kyrie ~ *Lord, have mercy*..... “Your Heart, O God, is Grieved” #945

Hymn of Praise ~ *Glory to God in the Highest* “All Glory Be To God On High” #947

Salutation and Collect of the Day Page 214

P The Lord be with you.
C And also with you.

^①“Cantate” is the traditional name for the Fifth Sunday of Easter. It is from the original Latin Introit: *Cantate Domino novum canticum*, “Sing ye to the Lord a new song.”

P O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

First Reading.....**Acts 8:26–40**

[Philip is sent to meet the Ethiopian eunuch to tell him the Good News about Jesus.]

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he opens not his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

P This is the Word of the Lord. **C** Thanks be to God.

Gradual^① **and Verse** *adapt. from St. Matthew 28:7; Heb. 2:7; Ps. 8:6; Rom. 6:9; St. John 14:23*

P Christ has risen from the dead.

C [God the Father] has crowned him with glory and honor,

P He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;

C he has put all things under his feet.

P We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again;

C death no longer has dominion over him.

P If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him

C and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Epistle.....**1 John 4:1–11**

[Test the spirits. God is love.]

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the

^①“Gradual” comes from the Latin “gradus” meaning ‘step’. In the ancient church these Psalm & Scripture verses were chanted from the steps of the Altar. It is a response to the First Lesson and a bridge to the Second Lesson.

world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

P This is the Word of the Lord. **G** Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamations.....Page 215

Holy + Gospel **St. John 15:1-8**

[Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. Abide in Him and abide in love.]

[Jesus said:] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord. **G** Praise to You, O Christ.

Nicene CreedPage 158

Children’s Message

Hymn of the Day “**At the Lamb’s High Feast**” #633:1-4

Sermon “**Forgiven, Fruitful Branches**” St. John 15:1-8

1. We bear fruit because of the _____ of sins
2. We continue to bear fruit by _____ on the vine
3. The fruit you bear _____ your discipleship

Offering and Attendance Registration

A Matter of Importance:

*Please Note: If you are visiting and have not already done so, please read **Communion Information** in the bulletin.*

Your Preparation for the Sacrament

“Father, I believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus, as my Savior from sin. I repent of my sins and ask Your forgiveness. I believe the Risen Christ is really present in this Sacrament and that with the bread and wine I receive His True Body and Blood. In accordance with the pure doctrine taught at this altar, I dedicate myself anew to You regular worship, study of Your Word, faithful witness and loving service. With the help of Your Holy Spirit, make this my conviction and intention. Amen.”

Other prayers may be found on the inside front cover of the Hymnal, “Lutheran Service Book.”

Offertory “**Create in Me**” #956

Prayer of the Church Page 215-16

✝ Service of The Sacrament ✝

PrefacePage 216

Lord’s Prayer, the Words of Our Lord^①Page 217

Sanctus^② ~ *Holy. Holy Holy*.....Page 161

C (♪) **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow’r and might:
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Pax Domini ~ *The Peace of the Lord*.....Page 217

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.
C Amen.

Agnus Dei^③ ~ *Lamb of God*Page 163

C (♪) **Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.**

The Distribution

*Communicants are ushered forward by rows. **Please receive the host upon an open palm.** The Chalice (or common cup) is available at every table. The Duty Elder will offer the individual cups and is followed by the Pastor who will offer the Chalice. **Please tip the base of the chalice yourself** to avoid spillage. The individual cups in the center ring contain de-alcoholized wine for those who have so requested.*

Distribution Hymns “At the Lamb’s High Feast” #633:5-8
“Chief of Sinners Though I Be” #611 (G)

Post-Communion Hymn “Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace” #937 (G)

Post-Communion Collect, Benedicamus and Benediction.....Page 218

Hymn of Departure..... “Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain” #865 (G)

Silent Prayer

Announcements and Sending:

P Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C** Thanks be to God!

① These are the very Words of Christ which make the elements of bread and wine a sacrament. Our Confessions state “When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament” (Large Catechism, v.10).

② “Sanctus” is Latin for “Holy.” This Hymn is based on *Isaiah 6:3* & *St. Matthew 21:9*

③ “Agnus Dei” (pronounced ‘ahn-yoos day-ee’) is Latin for “Lamb of God”

OUR MISSION STATEMENT: *Steadfast in the Word, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shares Christ and serves people with friendship in His love in all of God's world.*

WELCOME TO BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH! We extend a most joyous welcome to all who are worshipping today. We are confident the Lord will reveal Himself to you through this Divine Service so that you may know the joy of His presence in your life. To our guests: If you have any questions about the Christian faith or about Lutheran worship and practice, please ask the Pastor, one of our Elders, or any of our members. God bless you in Christ Jesus!



COMMUNION INFORMATION: Bethlehem is an orthodox, confessional Lutheran congregation. Following the teaching of God's Word, we believe that the Lord's Supper is more than a mere symbol, but that in the Lord's Supper we receive the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and to drink. Through this eating and drinking, we receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The Apostle Paul notes the importance of those who come to the Lord's Supper coming in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:25-19), that is, coming in an attitude of repentance, recognizing the bread and wine as the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and firmly believing Christ and his words that this is given for the forgiveness of sins. We also recognize that the Lord's Supper is also an outward sign of doctrinal unity. The Apostle Paul notes the importance of unity within the body of believers who receive this sacrament (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). For these reasons and since Christian Churches vary widely in their teachings about the Lord's Supper, we ask that **all guests please speak to the Pastor prior to approaching the Altar.** All communicants are asked to sign the Registration sheet in the Narthex.

WORSHIP NOTES: The Chasuble is a Eucharistic Vestment which the Pastor puts on before preparing the Sacramental vessels. It is a visual mark indicating that in the transition from the Service of the Word to the Service of the Sacrament something extraordinary is about to take place. The use of such a vestment is in keeping with both Lutheran tradition and practice; as our Lutheran Confessions state (*Ap XXIV*).

THE PASCHAL CANDLE in the Chancel symbolizes the presence of the risen Christ among us. Throughout the Easter season, it will remain in the chancel and lighted for worship as a reminder that Christ is our Resurrection Light that shatters the darkness of sin and death. The paschal candle is placed at the right side of the altar (denoting Christ's presence at the right hand of the throne of God) as the pastor faces the people. At Ascension (or the Sunday after), the candle will be extinguished and moved to the baptismal font for use at baptisms and at funerals. The Paschal candle is decorated with the following symbols: Alpha and Omega (Christ is unchangeable, the beginning and end of all things); and Five nails (the wounds of Christ bring us healing).

THE EASTER CROSS in the chancel is made from Christmas tree trunks. It is now draped in white, the color for Christ, and adorned with butterflies, a symbol of the resurrection. It is a reminder that the Savior whose birth we celebrated at Christmas was born to suffer and die on the cross and then rise to life to accomplish our redemption from sin and death.

AS WE COME INTO THE SANCTUARY - let us be sensitive to the needs of those who use the quiet and reverence of the Prelude as a time to prepare their hearts and minds for the Divine Service. **ALSO:** Out of respect for God's House and courtesy for other worshippers, please turn off all cell phones. Please also encourage one another to show respect to *God, His Word, our fellow-worshippers,* and *our Pastor* by limiting movement during Scripture Readings, Sermon & prayers. Thank you.

THE CHANCEL FLOWERS this Sunday are given to the Glory of God by George & Betty Nelson and in celebration of George's 90TH birthday and their 56TH wedding anniversary!

IN TODAY'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON the children will study the efforts Abraham made to ensure that his son Isaac would marry a person who loved God in the account of "Isaac and Rebekah." As a family discuss, "Why is it important to marry someone who shares your Christian faith? What are the blessings of sharing your beliefs with your spouse?"

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE STUDY: "Leviticus: Life in the Blood" -- Holiness. What is it? Leviticus shows how God goes to great lengths not only in defining true holiness, but also in sharing His holiness with his redeemed and ransomed people.

MIDWEEK ACTIVITIES include choir practice at 5:15 PM, a pot luck supper at 6:00 PM, and Bible classes at 7:00 PM. The Adult class continues the series, "See Through the Scriptures".

NEWSLETTER --The **MAY** edition of *The Bethlehem Star* newsletter is in your mailbox in the narthex. Make sure you have picked up your copy.

THANK YOU to all who participated in last Saturday's Bible Jamboree. It was a blessing for both workers and participants!

LARRY AND JULIE SCHOPPE: If you would like to send an encouraging note: Megan Schoppe Perez 104 Howard Lane Liberty Hill, TX 78642.

LUTHERAN WITNESS: If you have not yet paid for your Lutheran Witness subscription, please do so. The cost is \$13.65. The office needs to balance the accounting books with the bill received. Thank you!

PORTALS OF PRAYER devotion booklets for April through June are on the shelf in the narthex. Make sure you have one and pick up an extra copy for a friend!

"RENT A YOUTH": The youth are once again offering their services. This project provides an opportunity for middle and high school students, (grades 6 through 12), to assist older adults in completing routine light-duty household chores AND to foster fellowship between older adults and the youth in our church. If you have any questions, please see Yanneth Harris.

LWML SPRING EVENT: In Kilgore Saturday, May 5th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring a coffee mug with your name and address on the bottom to exchange. Meet at the church at 8 a.m. to travel together. Cost is \$12. ALL LADIES WELCOME!

GREETING CARDS: Check out the Mother's Day, Father's Day and Graduation cards on the card rack, along with birthday, get well, sympathy and others for a 50 cent donation to mites.

A SCHOLARSHIP FUND has been established for Aaron Jackson's college expenses. Aaron is attending Concordia University/Seward, NE to prepare for full-time Church Work as a Minister of Music. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on your check and place it in the offering plate. You can also send Aaron an encouraging note at: Concordia University, Aaron Jackson, 800 North Columbia Ave., Seward, NE 68434-1500.

ABOUT THE COVER: We have a very special relationship with Christ. He is not detached from us, but rather, we are grafted into Him through our Baptism and His love for us. Jesus is the true vine that gives and maintains life, and we are His branches that produce fruit for His kingdom, in keeping with the faith that has been worked in us by the Holy Spirit.

| OUR STEWARDSHIP LAST WEEK | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|----|
| OFFERINGS | | ATTENDANCE | |
| General Offering | \$2652.00 | Sunday School | 41 |
| [Needed per week: | \$2,668.00] | Divine Service | 59 |
| Building Fund | \$.00 | | |
| [Needed per week: | \$350.00] | Mid-Week (4/25) | 25 |

| <h2 style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY THIS WEEK</h2> | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Sunday (04/29) | 9:00 AM | Easter 5 (Cantate) |
| | 10:15 AM | Sunday School & Bible Classes |
| | Acolyte/Crucifer: | Divine Service (Setting 5) / Holy Communion |
| | Organist: | Christopher Harris |
| | Altar Guild: | Mary Bowden |
| | Duty Elder: | Sandy Smith & Natalie Byrd |
| | | Jim Broad |
| Wednesday (05/02) | 5:15 PM | Choir Practice |
| | 6:00 PM | Potluck Supper |
| | 7:00 PM | Bible Classes |
| Saturday (05/05) | 8:30 AM | LWML East Texas Zone Spring Workshop / Pilgrim-Kilgore |
| Sunday (05/06) | 9:00 AM | Easter 6 (Rogate) |
| | 10:15 AM | Sunday School & Bible Classes |
| | Acolyte/Crucifer: | Divine Service (Setting 1) / Holy Communion |
| | Organist: | Kristen Harris |
| | Altar Guild: | Mary Bowden |
| | Duty Elder: | Lori Fortner & Lana Bowden |
| | After Church: | Albert Harris |
| | | Evangelism Board / Church Picnic |

IN THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH:

National Leadership and Military: including members Kyle Lawson and Kyle Shepherd, as well as Robert Garcia [Juanita's son], and Jeremy Stafford [Marcy Hogan's nephew]

Health needs - Members: Albert Harris, Dorothy Jackson (4/15), George Nelson; Larry & Julie Schoppe (4/22) **Friends:** Hadleigh Pinkerton (4/15) [Alicia Hutton's great-niece]

Homebound - Members: Martha Kaudelka, Ardelle Samford, Johnnie Weaver

Comfort: family and friends of Marcella Garcia [wife of Rev. Ernesto Garcia and Sister in Law of Juanita Garcia]

Celebrating this week: Birthdays: Dorothy Jackson, Cooper Sheridan, Pat Stephenson ... **Baptismal Birthdays:** Laura Lewis, Alyssa Roller... **Wedding Anniversaries:** Mike & Shelia Flynn, Paul & Pat Stephenson

All who commune

NOTE: New prayers requests are in **BOLD**. Prayers submitted will stay on the prayer list for two weeks unless updated. Please inform the Pastor and the Church Office regarding the status of submitted prayers so we may be timely and up-to-date in petitions to our gracious God.

TO ADD PETITIONS TO OUR PRAYER CHAIN CALL LEA ROSIER AT (903) 729-1879 or (903) 391-5678

Note: The Letters in parentheses after the Hymn number indicate hymns selected because of direct connection to the Propers (i.e., Scripture Readings) for the day ... OT=Old Testament, FR=First Reading, SR= Second Reading, Ps=Psalm, V=Verse, E=Epistle, G=Gospel. Hymns with no such indication are hymns that, while having no direct connection to the Propers, still support the theme of the day.

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BETHLEHEM EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
 1515 South Loop 256 † Palestine, TX 75801
 Office: (903) 729-6362 † Fax: (903) 723-7725

Sunday School: 9:00 AM
 Adult Bible Class: 9:00 AM
 Divine Service: 10:15 AM

www.belctx.org
 info@belctx.org

Rev. David L. Adler,
 Pastor

“To Give Light to Those who Sit in Darkness”