



**Greater Milwaukee Synod Assembly
Opening Worship
7:00 pm
April 30, 2021**

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

We begin in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; amen. Jesus said, "I 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." Lord, you taught us that when we connect with you, we grow. When we are not connected, we wither and die.

We confess that we have not lived up to the calling you first whispered in our ears. We have gone astray. We have been weeds of isolation and thorny vines that carry no seed, choking our siblings of fruitfulness, stealing their sunshine, allowing no rain to fall upon new seed. We are guilty of serving our own needs rather than contributing to the whole. We are not connected to you. We are not connected to one another. Forgive us, connect us, graft us once again to you in grace.

There is good news; Christ came in the flesh to abide with us. God's love still grows in this world! In the name of Christ, we are forgiven. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are connected to God, to one another, and to the whole creation, that together we might participate in God's new creation. **Thanks be to God; amen.**

GATHERING SONG: *O Blessed Spring*

Michael Schaner, organist; Zach Jones, tenor; St Luke's Lutheran Church, Waukesha



1 O bless - ed spring, where word and sign em - brace us
2 Through sum - mer heat of youth - ful years, un - cer - tain
3 When au - tumn cools and youth is cold, when limbs their
4 As win - ter comes, as win - ters must, we breathe our
5 Christ, ho - ly Vine, Christ, liv - ing Tree, be praised for



in - to Christ the Vine: here Christ en - joins each one to
faith, re - bel - lious tears, sus - tained by Christ's in - fus - ing
heav - y har - vest hold, then through us, warm, the Christ will
last, re - turn to dust; still held in Christ, our souls take
this blest mys - ter - y: that word and wa - ter thus re -



be a branch of this life - giv - ing Tree.
rain, the boughs will shout for joy a - gain.
move with gifts of beau - ty, wis - dom, love.
wing and trust the prom - ise of the spring.
vive and join us to your Tree of Life.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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. Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Rev. Matt James, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Racine

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.

Word of God, Word of Life

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 22:25-31

Perrie Dralle, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Brookfield

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of those who | fear the LORD.

²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied,

Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts | live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;

all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD,

who rules over the nations.

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 before the LORD.
³⁰Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.
³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, "The LORD has acted!"

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

Rev. Stephen Boyhont, Mt. Hope Lutheran Church, West Allis

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: John 15:1-8

Rev. Char Guiliani, Incarnation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee

[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."

This is the gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Bishop Paul Erickson

HYMN OF THE DAY *God We Gather*



1 God, we gath - er as your peo - ple to raise our song a -
2 Oh, we sing for all the chil - dren, that one day they be
3 Oh, we pray for all the young lives cut short by fear and
4 God, we're work - ing for the fu - ture when chil - dren far and



bove, and we dare to claim the prom - ise of your love.
free; and we sing for gen - er - a - tions yet to be,
shame, so a - fraid of who they are and whom they love.
wide can . . . live their lives with dig - ni - ty and pride.



Though the day may not yet be here, we
that they nev - er have a rea - son to
May the mes - sage now be ban - ished that your
As they grow in strength and stat - ure, may they



trust it soon will be, when your chil - dren will be free.
doubt that they are blest. May they, in your love, find rest.
love is for the few; may their faith in you re - new.
join us hand in hand, as a - gainst all hate we stand.

Refrain



Oh, may our hearts and minds be o - pened, fling the church doors o - pen



wide. May there be room e - nough for ev - 'ry - one in - side.



For in God there is a wel - come, in God we all be -



long. May that wel - come be our song.

CREED

**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.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Please share a visible sign of peace or enter a greeting into the chat.

OFFERING

Our offering will be supporting the ELCA Women International Leaders Fund, which invests in established and emerging women leaders from our global companion churches. Learn more [here](#).

To give, please visit <https://tithe.ly/give?c=1159385>

A TIME OF THANKSGIVING

For the one holy catholic and apostolic church in all times and places, of which Our Savior's Lutheran Church and Abiding Savior Lutheran Church have been a part,

We give our thanks and praise.

For the people who founded these congregations, who made personal sacrifices in order for them to grow and flourish, and who used their talents and skills in building up these communities of faith,

We give our thanks and praise.

For these congregations' ministries throughout their lives, their gatherings for praise and prayer, their faithful use of the means of grace, and their study of the scriptures,

We give our thanks and praise.

For the Greater Milwaukee Synod, its present and past bishops, staff, and other leaders who have helped these congregations throughout the years, especially as they have been faithful in their proclamation of the gospel.

We give our thanks and praise

For all who have been a part of the ministry of these congregations throughout their lives, those who have remained constant in the face of challenges, those who have moved away, and all who have died and now rest in you, we give you thanks, rejoicing that we are joined together in one eternal communion, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

United as God's people and connected to all creation, let us lift our prayers before God in trust and hope:

(As each category of prayers is introduced, please enter your petitions into the chat feature, and they will be read aloud.)

We pray for:

Our planet...

Our nation...

Our churches...

Our neighbors, near and far...

*(Each set of petitions will conclude with the words "Great God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**")*

LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

SENDING SONG *Shall We Gather at the River* (ELW 423)

Michael Schaner, organist; Zach Jones, tenor; St Luke's Lutheran Church, Waukesha



1 Shall we gath - er at the riv - er, where bright an - gel feet have trod,
2 On the mar - gin of the riv - er, wash - ing up its sil - ver spray,
3 Ere we reach the shin - ing riv - er, lay we ev - 'ry bur - den down;
4 Soon we'll reach the shin - ing riv - er, soon our pil - grim - age will cease;



with its crys - tal tide for - ev - er flow - ing by the throne of God?
we will walk and wor - ship ev - er, all the hap - py gold - en day.
grace our spir - its will de - liv - er, and pro - vide a robe and crown.
soon our hap - py hearts will quiv - er with the mel - o - dy of peace.

Refrain



Yes, we'll gath - er at the riv - er, the beau - ti - ful, the beau - ti - ful riv - er;



gath - er with the saints at the riv - er that flows by the throne of God.

Text: Robert Lowry, 1826–1899
Music: HANSON PLACE, Robert Lowry

ORDER FOR OPENING OF AN ASSEMBLY

As in one body we have many members,
so we, who are many, are one body in Christ.

Where two or three are gathered in my name, says the Lord,

I am there among them.

Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness,
making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Let us pursue what makes for justice and peace, and for mutual upbuilding.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

I declare this assembly to be in session in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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