



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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www.hopelutheranstl.org



✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

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May 2022

"On Christ's Ascension I Now Build"

In December we celebrated the great festival of Christmas—the Nativity of our Lord. God the Son came down to us and took on human flesh and blood. Through Lent and Holy Week we observed Jesus' descent into suffering, death, and the grave. Jesus' journey into the world to rescue us and give us life is marked by coming down, by humbling Himself. Then on Easter Sunday we joyously celebrated His rising to life again. We've been celebrating this great news in the weeks since.

On **Thursday, May 26 at 7:00 p.m.** — *The Ascension of Our Lord* — we will celebrate Jesus' victorious reign and our abundant life in Him. Jesus' exaltation began when He descended into hell and continued with His rising to life. But the salvation story does not end there. Jesus' Ascension is the next step in completing His Father's mission to win our salvation.

Sad to say, Jesus' Ascension doesn't get as much attention as Christmas or Easter do. Perhaps this is because we celebrate it on a Thursday. Why a Thursday? Because it marks 40 days after Jesus' Resurrection. Jesus remained on earth 40 days after He rose from the dead (see Acts 1:3). You can be sure that He was busy teaching His apostles and other disciples what His dying and rising meant (also read Luke 24 and John 20-21). After all, no one had ever risen from the dead before! Jesus had to put all the pieces of the puzzle together for His followers—what kind of Savior He is and what kind of life He gives through His Gospel and Sacraments. This was the stuff they needed to know since they were about to be sent out to teach others.

Perhaps another reason Ascension Day isn't a big deal anymore is that we've lost its meaning. We tend to think that once we've celebrated Easter, we've come to the end of the salvation story. But that's like leaving

a baseball game at the seventh inning stretch! Your team may be winning, but you still haven't seen the glorious conclusion. After all, your team may yet hit another home run or two. Jesus' Ascension leads us to "the rest of the story."

On Christ's Ascension...

The "Formula of Concord"—one of our Lutheran confessional writings that faithfully explains Holy Scripture—says this about Jesus' Ascension: "*Now He has ascended to heaven, not merely as any other saint, but as the apostle testifies [Ephesians 4:10], above all heavens. He also truly fills all things, being present everywhere, not only as God, but also as man*" (Formula of Concord, VIII, 27; *Concordia*, p. 586). What does this mean?

First, Jesus' Ascension means that His work of saving all people is completed. When He died on the cross, Jesus said, "*It is finished.*" When He ascends into heaven, Jesus shows that everything for salvation is accomplished. Your eternal life with God is a "done deal." Love came down at Christmas, accomplished forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation on the cross, and then went back up to God the Father. In other words, Jesus finished His journey. Your life with God—now and into eternity—is safe and secure. What a comfort when doubts annoy and temptations assail and sorrows come crashing in!

Second, Jesus' Ascension means that a perfect human being has entered heaven and sits at God's right hand. We can try all we want to get to heaven on our own steam, but that is impossible for fallen humans. The people at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) tried to get up to heaven, but their pride was their downfall. We try to impress God with our good lives, but then our pride leads us to ruin also. No human being can enter God's glorious presence and live. Until now! Jesus not only breaks the bonds of death,

but He also opens the barrier between God and human beings. It's only because of Jesus that anyone has any hope of entering God's glorious, eternal presence.

Third, Jesus' Ascension means that He rules over all things. Without this step in Jesus' exaltation, we in the Church would wander through life aimless and scared. We would let things like wars, pandemics, crime, etc. lead us to despair. We would vainly try to create some sort of heaven on earth. Without Jesus' Ascension, we might think that it were up to us to mold and shape the Church like a wax nose—make it look and act differently with every passing fad of teaching.

But with Jesus' Ascension, we are comforted. Jesus rules all things for the good of His Church. Everything, from political scandals to culture wars to personal tragedies, takes on new meaning. Jesus uses everything—yes, even the conflicts and wars, even our personal trials and stresses—to strengthen us in faith toward Him and in fervent love toward one another. Nothing is out of Jesus' gracious control. It all works for the good of His people. That's what Jesus' Ascension means.

Faith Comes by Hearing...

How does this good, Biblical teaching of Jesus' Ascension help us in faith and life? Why is it important for the Church to hold on to Jesus' Ascension as one of its prime teachings?

Let's take a brief look at the story in Acts 1:1-11. First, Jesus teaches His disciples and promises them the Holy Spirit. While Jesus appears to go away, He is not leaving His Church alone. He promises to be with His Church through the work of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26, Jesus said the Holy Spirit "*will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*" In John 15:26, our Lord said, "*When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.*" Jesus promises the Holy Spirit who will, in turn, keep our focus on Jesus Himself.

According to Acts 1:9, "*as [the disciples] were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.*" This key verse does not say that Jesus is gone; He's just hidden from sight.

Ponder this illustration. A mother and a six month-old baby are playing together on the living room floor. Mom has to get up and go into the kitchen. The baby starts looking around and doesn't see Mom.

She starts fussing as she fears that she is all alone. While Mom is in the kitchen, she speaks so her baby can hear her: "It's alright, dear. Mommy's still here." The baby is thus comforted, not by the visible presence of Mom, but by hearing her voice.

That's what the Ascension of Jesus means for us Christians. A cloud hid Him from the disciples' sight, but He was not absent. Instead, Jesus comforts His disciples—both then and now—with His voice. Jesus' Ascension teaches us something most important about the Church: the Church does not live in the time of seeing, but in the time of hearing. Faithfully hearing the Word of God read, preached, and sung is the most important thing any Christian can do in life. As St. Paul says, "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ*" (Romans 10:17).

We in the Church should trust our ears more than our eyes. After all, our eyes might lead us astray. If pews look empty, we might despair and not trust Jesus' eternal care for His Church. If pews look full, we might gloat and try to take the credit ourselves for how we brought people into our church. Instead of relying on our eyes, our Lord calls us to rely on our ears. The more we *hear* the Gospel of Jesus' gifts of forgiveness and life, the more we are comforted and strengthened in faith. The more we *hear* the Gospel, the better equipped we are to give "*a reason for the hope that is in [us]*" (1 Peter 3:15).

Please set aside Thursday, May 26 to be in the Lord's House. Not only will we hear of Jesus ascending to God's right hand, but we'll also hear Him as He comforts us and gives us courage. When Jesus ascends to God's right hand, so do we. By His gracious working, we are His body. Jesus promises to rule all things for the good of His body, the Church. As the Ascension Day hymn teaches us to sing:

***On Christ's ascension I now build
The hope of my ascension;
This hope alone has always stilled
All doubt and apprehension;
For where the Head is, there as well
I know His members are to dwell
When Christ will come and call them.***
(Lutheran Service Book, 492:1)

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Notes from the Kantor

Thank You!

A very heartfelt thank you to all the musicians that blessed our Lenten, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday services. I usually comment the week after Easter, "I am so blessed to be in the driver's seat and have the best seat in the house" to hear them proclaim to me the Word of God, and this year was no different. We are truly blessed at Hope with an active and high achieving music program. What a joy it is to work with them week in and week out. But don't think they are done. No, the celebration continues right through Trinity Sunday hymn festival featuring composer, organist, and choral director Kevin Hildebrand.

Celebrating Ascension

Within the season of Easter (50 days until Pentecost) we celebrate Jesus' ascension into

heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. We will celebrate this significant time in Jesus' life with a Divine Service on Thursday, May 26 at 7:00 p.m. This service will feature the Kantorei choristers. Please come celebrate with us and hear the Word of God proclaimed in song by some of the youngest among us.

Music in a Sacred Space

We have held a number of great events so far this year, including the *Laudamus* of Concordia Seminary and the *Singing Saints* of St. Paul Lutheran High in Concordia, MO. Remaining in this season is the Holy Trinity Hymn Festival on Sunday, June 12 at 4:00 pm. The hymn festival will feature our choirs and instrumentalists, as well as some guest musicians. Make plans to attend! Plans are well underway to bring in more artists to grace our space for the 2022-2023 season.

Holy Trinity Hymn Festival

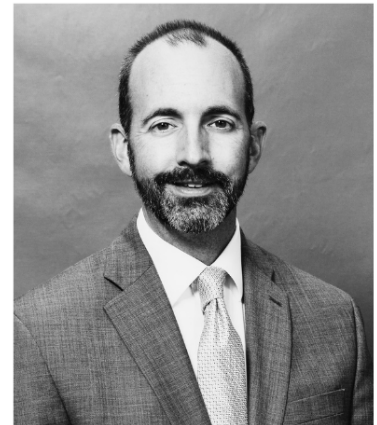
Kevin Hildebrand, organist

& the musicians of

Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

4:00 PM

Sunday, June 12



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In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:7-10).

...O LORD, we pray, give us success!" (Psalm 118:25).

SERVING IN GOD'S MISSION In February, we completed a Sunday morning Bible study series—thank you to everyone who participated and shared. Your hopes, prayers and thinking about the future of our congregation as a family, journeying on the same road together—all under God's grace and provision—are cherished treasure. What's next in Hope's strategic planning process? **A series of congregational workshop sessions, in which all members of Hope are invited to participate.** Using *Re:Vitality* resources developed in the LCMS Office of National Mission, the outcome of these lively sessions will be a comprehensive strategic ministry plan that will include Hope's vision, mission and purpose statements, as well as a set of specific goals designed

to extend the proclamation of the Gospel to the communities that God has called us to serve. **IMPORTANT: Please mark your calendar now and plan to join your fellow Hope members in our fellowship hall on the following dates.** ALL are welcome and encouraged to join us; we need your input.

Saturday, September 10, 9:00-11:15 am

Saturday, September 24, 8:00-11:45 am

Saturday, October 8, 9:00-11:30 am

Saturday, October 22, 8:00 am-Noon

Saturday, November 5, 9:00-10:30 am

More details (previews of agenda and content) to follow, but for now, please mark your calendar and plan to join a vital conversation that we pray will impact our congregation's mission and ministry for the coming generations, to the glory and praise of Christ our Lord!

P.S. Mark your calendar now with the dates/times shown above...and then come. Unable to make a specific session? No worries...plan to join us for the others.

Rejoice in the Lord Always!

The past two years have certainly been rough for all of us. In March 2020, we locked down and had to forego in-person worship services for a time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then we have been slowly returning to normal—returning to in-person services, adding Sunday School back to the weekly routine, opening more pews and trusting one another to respect our needs for space, resuming in-person meetings, and getting back to using hymnals for services. We thank our gracious Savior for His faithfulness in seeing us through these unprecedented times.

We can also rejoice in some new features to our life and work together at Hope. We continue to provide

live streaming of our services (on Hope's Facebook page). This benefits brothers and sisters at Hope as well as fellow Christians living in elsewhere. We continue hygienic practices at Holy Communion—washing hands and alcohol-soaked purificators. We have also adopted some new procedures for Communion: the continuous flow at the rail and the single dismissal after distribution. The continuous flow provides a noble simplicity. The single common dismissal provides a sense of unity as we all together hear the good news of God's gift in the Sacrament.

"Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!" (Psalm 105:1)

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

Newsletter Article – May 2022

Living Sacrifices

Stewardship is not just about giving money to the church. It includes this, to be sure, but it is not limited to it. Stewardship involves our whole life – everything we have and everything we are.

Let us not, though, fall into the trap of thinking that because we give of ourselves in one area then we can neglect giving in another. Stewardship is not stealing from Peter to pay Paul. It is not a game that we play whereby we justify ourselves in not giving a tenth of our income because we have given in some other way.

This is why our Lord warns: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” (Matthew 23:23) We are given to do both – tithe of ourselves and what we have.

And so it is that St. Paul makes his appeal to us: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We are not to have the mind of the world, where we exchange equal weight of this for an equal weight of that and think that we have done what God has required. Our whole life is given over for service in and for the Church of God. This is to be done in thanksgiving for what God in Christ has accomplished for us. This is our spiritual worship, the reasonable response to what He has done for us. Not one for the other but all in all.

But what does this look like? St. Paul never lays down a general principle without also giving us some practical application of what shape that principle is to take concretely. He gives the general principle that our bodies are to be living sacrifices to God. And, after admonishing those who have been given particular

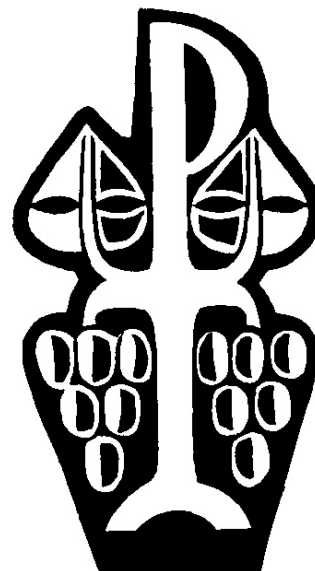
gifts of grace to serve the church, St. Paul then speaks generally of what is expected of all. He says:

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” (Romans 12:9-13)

This is what it looks like to present your bodies as living sacrifices. This is how we live out the grace of God here in time.

Let us then heed the apostle’s teaching. Let us present our bodies – everything that we have and everything that we are – as living sacrifices to God, our reasonable response to what God in Christ Jesus accomplished for us by His death and resurrection. Through this, we have forgiveness of sins, a new life in Christ, and eternal salvation. And through this worship, the grace of God is made manifest in His saints – for the church and the world.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry: lcms.org/stewardship



“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ” (Augsburg Confession, 24:3). This month we keep celebrating the season of Easter—the most important time of the Christian year. The Church celebrates Easter not just on one day (Easter Sunday), but for a whole “week of Sundays,” that is, seven Sundays. Christ’s resurrection life is our new life. Each week we hear more of that wonderful Good News. Christ Jesus is the first fruits of the dead. He gives us His victory over sin, death, and hell. What great news! It gives us Christians a whole new purpose and outlook for life. Here’s what’s coming up in Divine Services for the month of May:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
May 1	3 rd Sunday of Easter	John 10:11-16	THE GOOD SHEPHERD – Jesus is our Good Shepherd because He sacrificed Himself for His flock—us! Jesus’ sacrifice brings people from all nations into His one flock.
May 8	4 th Sunday of Easter	John 16:16-22	THE NEW CREATION – We may be separated from Christ right now—for a little while—but we joyfully look forward to the permanent reunion in eternity. Since we are in Christ, we are new creations and all things are new.
May 15	5 th Sunday of Easter	John 16:5-15	THE SINGING CHURCH – Jesus explains the threefold work of the Holy Spirit: 1) to reveal our sin; 2) to exalt Christ and His righteousness; and 3) to reveal the judgment on the prince of this world. For all this we sing Christ’s praises!
May 22	6 th Sunday of Easter	John 16:23-33	THE PRAYING CHURCH – Since God has marvelously saved us and made us holy people, we learn to pray and trust Him. That’s the Christian’s “holy life.”
May 29	7 th Sunday of Easter	John 15:26-16:4	THE EXPECTANT CHURCH – After Jesus ascends, His people look forward to His return. In the mean time, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to comfort us and keep us in the faith.

MR. & MRS. CLUB

Our group gathered on Tuesday, April 26, at 11:30 a.m. in the auditorium of Hope Church. We each brought our lunch and enjoyed the fellowship with other members of our group. There were 16 of us there which is a good turnout for us. We hadn’t seen each other for at least 6 months so we all had a lot of catching up to do. Looking forward to getting together sooner and possibly at a restaurant the next time to enjoy fellowship and good food. Wishing everyone a good Spring and Summer.

THRIVE PARENT UNIVERSITY

Thrive Parent University has started again on Thursday nights. This program is an important part of the pro-life work that Thrive does to save babies and help strengthen families. At this time they are not serving dinner or providing childcare. They have snacks, Bible study, and the parenting lesson. Hope volunteers will be helping with greeting moms and serving snacks on the second Thursday of each month. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Judy Maichel at mjmaichel@juno.com or 314-352-1319.

Phone: 314-352-0014

May 2022

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <u>Easter 3</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:15 Coffee hour 10:30 Bible Class/ SS 11:30 Schola/Confirmation	2	3 -----DOXOLOGY	4 FOR MISSIONARIES 5:00 Kantorei rehearsal	5 ----- 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	6	7 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
8 <u>Easter 4</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:15 Coffee hour 10:30 Bible Class/ SS 11:30 Schola/Confirmation	9 7:00 Board of Elders	10	11 5:00 Kantorei rehearsal	12 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	13	14 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
15 <u>Easter 5</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:15 Coffee hour 10:30 Bible Class/SS 11:30 Schola	16	17	18 5:00 Kantorei rehearsal	19 6:00 ThriVe Parent University	20	21 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
22 <u>Easter 6</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:15 Coffee hour 10:30 Bible Class/ SS 11:30 Schola	23	24	25 5:00 Kantorei rehearsal	26 The Ascension of Our Lord 7:00 pm	27	28 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
29 <u>Easter 7</u> 9:00 Divine Service 10:15 Coffee hour 10:30 Bible Class No Sunday School No Schola	30 <i>Memorial Day</i> Church Office Closed	31		Elder: 1 – Jim Frost 8 – Scot Kinnaman 15 – TBD 22 – Scot Kinnaman 26 – Chad Rolland 29 – Scot Kinnaman	Altar Guild: 1 Spyers/Truebe 8 Asburry/Bergdolt 15 Brown/Patton 22 Keller/Janssen 26 Bergdolt/Temme 29 Asburry/Bergdolt	