

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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713-686-8254

Rev. Jim Berggren

April 28th, 2024

Fifth Sunday of Easter

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright

ELW 384

INVOCATION

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen.*

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: *Amen.*

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

C: *We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.*

P: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of V Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

C: *Amen.*

PASTORAL GREETING

THE KYRIE

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

This is the Feast

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also, with you.**

P: Let us pray, together.

C: **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.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

April 28, 2024 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way, he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way, home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ^[37] ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

THE PSALM **Psalm 22:25-31**

SECOND READING: **1 John 4:7-21**

God’s Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love

drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

ELW Pg. 151

Alleluia.

Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia.

THE HOLY GOSPEL **John 15:1-8**

The Vine and the Branches

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. -

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Congregational response: **Praise to you, O Christ.***

YOUTUBE VIDEO – https://youtu.be/ugfNRPoxgXM?si=D7lxPqQS_P8I3NLW

Sermon Rev. Jim Berggren

EASTER 5B 4-28-24, JOHN 15.1-8

ABIDING

Fun with counting words. In only 8 verses, John writes 1 ‘prune’, 3 ‘vines’, 6 ‘branches’, 6 ‘bears’, 6 ‘fruits’, (the ‘bears’ and the ‘fruits’ bear fruit together), and 8 ‘abides.’

I’ve heard lengthy sermons by constipated preachers on pruning. It is barely emphasized in the text. Abiding is the big word here, but nobody likes it much because it involves waiting. Instant gratification and abiding don’t go together.

Abide is somewhat of an old-fashioned word. It is not used a lot. No motel advertises, “Abide here!” Nobody says Jose Altuve is abiding on 2nd base. But he is. He is there, patiently waiting forward, alertly anticipating the fruits of snagging the grounder, and making a double-play.

‘Abide’ is a word that belongs to another time. It is agricultural and so being, it involves waiting. You wait for the seed to sprout; you wait for the sprout to grow into a plant. You wait for the rain to water. You wait for the plant to blossom; you wait for the new fruit to set and grow. No number of seminars, or how-to lectures at tomato plants will make them grow faster.

However, my upstairs neighbor, while abiding with the fruit of the agave cactus, would sing love songs of the forlorn, to my tomato plants, hoping that the extra carbon dioxide in their faces, would make them happy. Sadly, William moved back to Puerto Rico and now the poor tomatoes have to be satisfied with my bad jokes and sermon practice.

Abiding equals dwelling, not departing, remaining beside, maintaining, preparing for, enduring, sustaining, polite deference, and steadfastness.

Abiding is being there for the long haul. We sing those beautiful words, “When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O Abide with me.” Lutherans and our progenitors in Catholicism and Judaism, have been around a long time. We will abide through the religious persecution that is underway in many parts of the world. We will outlast the religious faddists that come and go in a season. Who even remembers the Maharaj Ji, and Millenium ’73, right here in Houston? It was a big deal!

Maharaji Ji was 15 years old and claimed to be god. Rennie Davis of the Chicago Seven, an adherent, helped him organize the event for November 8-10, 1973. They rented the Astrodome for \$75,000. They made the cover of the Rolling Stone! They chartered 30 jets to bring in followers. They booked 35,000 hotel beds, and reserved space in the Astrodome parking lot for...(not kidding around here) for UFO's...Reserved Parking. Expecting 100,000 to attend, maybe a little over 10,000 actually were there. The financial losses split the movement.

Maharaj Ji moved to Colorado and at 16, decided to marry his 24-year-old secretary. He couldn't in Colorado, without his mother's permission, but she couldn't be reached in India. As the group, "Canned Heat," so aptly intoned, "The Po-lice in Denver, don't want no longhairs hangin' around." So much for that little god!

At the time, I was serving as an Intern at St. Luke's, in Richardson, first suburb north of Dallas, under The Reverend F. Leslie Conrad, Jr. Leslie was mad, because the boy had been telling people he was god, since he was nine. We had 3 services on Sunday mornings. One of us preached and the other did the liturgy. It was Leslie's Sunday to preach. He got on a roll about the Maharaj Ji, and called him a name that I thought I didn't hear right. I vowed to listen more carefully the 2nd service. Yep, he used the same word in the next two services, and I'm thinking.....maybe that word means something different in Kansas. Then Leslie published it for his monthly sermon in the Newsletter. It was in black and white, baby, no getting around it. Nobody else could've gotten away with that.

Two weeks later, Leslie wandered into my office waving an envelope and saying that he had received a pointed written reaction to that sermon. I said, "Oh, oh! What did it say?"

Leslie read to me, "Thank you Pastor. That was a great sermon! Enclosed is a check for \$45,000.00 for the organ fund. We are in this together." Only Leslie could get by with that. He was a brassy trumpet for God. I'm just a court jester. Or as a former bishop wrote to me, "I knew you were a flake. I'm glad you are God's flake."

Abiding is being there for the long haul. Its absence makes us smaller. Friendships break off. Business contracts are breached. Marriage covenants are neglected. Road rage kills. Abidingly, give the right of way. God alone knows the river of tears shed by the absence of abiding. Chill!

Bonhoeffer, with deep wisdom notes that the freedom of other people requires abiding. It can be a burden when someone else's freedom collides with who you are. Suddenly you don't agree. Will you give up on a relationship? No! As long as we are safe, we can abide.

The freedom God gives us all, includes our nature, our individuality, what we bring to life as our gift. It also includes the usual weaknesses and oddities which vex us. A disagreement about the nature of our God-given freedom can produce friction and conflict.

Then it is time to bear with and abide. To abide means getting involved with the God-given reality of the other person, which is different than ours. Abiding is a great way to recognize the image of God in other people: bearing with it when difficult, and celebrating in joy, when good fruits are borne. The whole point of being an equal branch grafted to Christ the Vine is finally bearing fruit.

When the socialists took over Russia in 1917, they were devilishly cunning. They didn't make Christianity illegal. Their new constitution actually guaranteed freedom of religion. But they did make it illegal for the church to do any good works. The church was not allowed to feed the hungry, or educate, or house orphans, or care for the sick. Those became jobs of Lenin's new state. It rendered the church officially irrelevant. It had to become an underground church. This required decades of abiding for faithful followers of Christ. Upon Lenin's death in 1924, and Stalin's takeover, Christian communities were isolated. Only 7 years, and individual members of Christian congregations were isolated from each other. Many were sent to the Gulags, Labor/Death camps, for thought crimes. The insidious process became brutal. Open to any page in the works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Losing connections to the vine is deadly. It is not good.

In Genesis, God spent a lot of time creating, and then saying how good it was. In Genesis 1:4, God separated light from darkness, saw the light, and said, "It's good." Genesis 1:10, God differentiated land and water and said, "Good!" In 1:12, God calls into being all of the plants, flora galore, fed by the sun and wonderful CO₂, and He said, "This is good." In 1:18, God tossed out the sun and moon and some galaxies, and said, "Wow, that's good!" Then he worked on fish and birds and all the animals, and said, "THAT'S GOOD!"

Then he created humans and told them to be fruitful and multiply and take this whole perfect creation and till it and keep it, name it and enjoy it. That work of abiding there, was the human's first blessing in the garden. Maintain it. Let it grow. Abide with it in joy. And God said, "VERY GOOD."

Apparently, God is completely delighted with his creation.

Then a dark note creeps in. God doesn't say that anything is NOT good until Genesis 2:18. Having created humans, God said, "It is NOT good that humans should be alone." Alone?...abide in a place where other branches are on the vine. Alone.....graft to another place on the vine. Form a living partnership with God's creation and His people. Because alone?...NOT GOOD.

If you are being isolated, try to find a place to abide where you are connected. One of the laws of the jungle is that predators isolate prey. If any organization, a rule, an arbitrary sanction, or a controlling person, tries to isolate you, grab ahold of the vine of Christ Jesus. Find the herd protected by the good shepherd. That's good

Before our eyes flutter open in the morning, we are already dependent on thousands of people. Hey, we're from Houston. Hurricanes, floods, ice-storms, and scorching heat? When things drastically change, we rely on each other, and our abiding nature as things work their way back to normal. It takes time. We are given opportunities to practice abiding. Try it in traffic. My motto is, "I am not a rat, and this is not a race." It works every time. If you are frustrated and in a long line, abide a little, and maybe make a friend, or learn something new.

There is no life without abiding together. Without community, illness and death rates are higher among those who don't find close human relationships. There is a biological and creational basis to form relationships. If we can't, we are in peril. Simply abide on the vine of Jesus Christ and then fruit happens. Abiding is not passive hanging around. It is active waiting ahead for the nourishing life that comes through the vine of Christ, Our Lord. You will grow and fruit in miraculous ways.

Mutual abiding on God's grapevine means that there are two folks in the same place. Jesus and you. We abide together to produce the fruit of abiding love. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Around You, O Lord Jesus

ELW 468

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

APOSTLES' CREED

P: God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

C: 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;

THE 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.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

Lamb of God

ELW Pg. 146

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

The Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in Eternal Life.

POST COMMUNION SONG

Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider: Shepherding God, you have prepared a table before us and nourished us with your love. Send us forth from this banquet to proclaim your goodness and share the abundant mercy of Jesus, our redeemer and friend.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing

ELW 389

GO IN PEACE, IN SERVICE

C: Thanks be to God!

PSALM 19:14

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*



- ♣ **Antonio Benavides**
- ♣ **Candy Berggren**
- ♣ **Elvin Bethea**
- ♣ **Pat Bethea**
- ♣ **Barney Boeker**
- ♣ **Bill Carty**
- ♣ **Vicki Carty**
- ♣ **Lorraine Chavez**
- ♣ **Patty Conberi**
- ♣ **Cathy Doughty**
- ♣ **David Dukleth**
- ♣ **Anna Gardner**
- ♣ **Nadine Jones**
- ♣ **Linda Kuhar**
- ♣ **Daniel Lara**
- ♣ **Kenneth Magrill**
- ♣ **Todd Miskel**
- ♣ **Jeremy Mitchell**
- ♣ **Geraine Moore**
- ♣ **Mike Paine**
- ♣ **Dorothy Preuss**
- ♣ **Rosie Stork**
- ♣ **Vern Terry**
- ♣ **Jaime Urbanski**
- ♣ **Bennie Valites**
- ♣ **David Watson**



ALTAR FLOWERS

Altar flowers are given by Anita Cooper in loving memory of Edward Cooper.

COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **May 19th, 2024** at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.
Church Council

FRIENDSHIP CLUB

The Friendship Club will be meeting Saturday, **May the 18th**,
at the church for a pot luck supper.

We will begin to gather at 4:00 pm and supper will be served at 5:00 pm.

Ike Thompson is planning to cook a brisket so bring any dish
you feel would go well - baked beans, coleslaw, potato salad, etc.

Hope to see y'all there! - Nancy Beamesderfer

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

APRIL

7 Reader – Steve Schulze
P/E – Linda Cuzzort

14 Reader – Nancy Beamesderfer
P/E – Penny Schick

21 Reader – Ike Thompson
P/E – John Stokes

28 Reader – Mallory Hileman
P/E – Nancy Beamesderfer

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist
Nancy Beamesderfer

MAM

Memorial Assistance Ministries
1625 Blalock Rd. - Houston, Texas 77080

Memorial Resale Store

QUARTERLY HALF OFF SALE!

Friday May 17, and Saturday May 18, 2024

MAM will have almost everything 50% off at Blalock location.

(Excluding Boutique and new Jewelry)

*Resale proceeds typically make up 20-30% of MAM's annual revenues,
so, any effort to increase sales directly supports ALL programs and services!*

LOOKING FOR A NEW OR BETTER JOB?

MAM Employment Services

is opening a new vocational training class **May 30, thru June 29, 2024**
for Electrocardiography (EKG Technician) Interpretation Training.

See posted flyer for details! or you can log in to **www.mamhouston.org**
If someone you know is looking for a new or better job, this might be a fit.
Healthcare professions generally pay well and are fairly recession resistant.

SAFEGUARDS SAFETY TRAINING
HOLYCROSS COUPON CODE FOR 15% DISCOUNT: HCLC2024

CLASS	DAY	DATE	TIME
Adult CPR *CPR only (\$79) *CPR + First Aid (\$92)	Sunday	4/7/2024	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Saturday	5/4/2024	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Sunday	5/26/2024	1 pm — 4:30 pm
	Sunday	6/9/2024	1 pm — 4:30 pm
Adult & Pediatric CPR *CPR only (\$85) *CPR + First Aid (\$99)	Saturday	4/6/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Friday	4/19/2024	9 am — 1:30 pm
	Saturday	5/18/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Friday	5/31/2024	9 am — 1:30 pm
	Saturday	6/15/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
Sunday	6/30/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm	
Basic Life Support (Healthcare Providers and Professional Rescuers) (\$89)	Saturday	4/13/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Friday	5/3/2024	9 am — 1:30 pm
	Friday	5/17/2024	9 am — 1:30 pm
	Saturday	5/23/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	6/8/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm
Saturday	6/27/2024	1 pm — 5:30 pm	
CPR Instructor Course (\$325)	Saturday	4/20/2024	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Friday	5/10/2024	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Saturday	6/1/2024	9 am — 5:30 pm
	Friday	6/21/2024	9 am — 5:30 pm

Classes are in the Youth Room, Media Room and in the Annex.

You can sign up online for classes by going to

www.safeguards-safety.com and choosing “Register for Classes.”

Or call 713-854-8085 for more information

Congregation members and their families will receive a discount of 15% for any class by using the above-mentioned coupon code when signing up.

John Lambeth

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE

9:30 a.m. Traditional Worship service with Rev. Jim Berggren –WC

Nursery is available for small children during the service – Crib Room

10:30 a.m. Coffee fellowship following the service –FLC

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

29 Mon	30 Tues	1 Wed	2 Thurs	3 Fri	4 Sat
<p>7 am—7 pm Early voting --YR</p> <p>11—12 pm ELC Cooking for Spring Party —FLC kitchen</p> <p>7—8 pm Boy Scout Troop meeting —FLC room</p>	<p>7 am—7 pm Early voting --YR</p> <p>11—12 pm ELC Cooking for Spring Party —FLC kitchen</p>	<p>9 am Men's Breakfast</p> <p>10—12 pm ELC Spring party rehearsal—FLC</p> <p>11 am Choir rehearsal —CL</p> <p>12 pm Bible Study —AT</p>	<p>10—12 pm ELC Spring party rehearsal —FLC</p> <p>8 pm AA Women meeting —FLCA</p>	<p>9—12:30 pm ELC Spring party —FLC + kitchen</p> <p>9 am-1:30 pm SST Basic Life Support —MR/YR</p>	<p>1—4:30 pm SST Adult CPR —MR/YR</p> <p>4:30 pm Guitar class —CR</p> <p>6:00 pm Saturday Informal Service —AT</p>

AT =Atrium, CL=Choir Loft, FLC= Family Life Center, FLCA=Annex,

KiA= Kids in Action, MR=Media Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room

BLS=Basic Life Support, SST=Safeguards Safety Training, UCL=Upcycled Crafty Ladies