

God's Service Sunday, May 19, 2024 (a Thomas Mass)

Day of Pentecost

ELW Service of the Word



Worship Plan Notes

Do welcome and first reading from the pulpit.

WELCOME

Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Crossing all boundaries that would separate us, the Spirit brings the wideness of God's mercy to places we least expect it. The Thomas mass is celebrated under the name of the apostle who seemed to have more questions than answers in his faith. Faith and doubt are symbiotic and only together are they whole. Bringing our questions, voicing our doubts we embrace one another in all our complexities and differences within the mysteries of God and the presence of the holy. Let us take a moment and listen to the prelude as we prepare our hearts and minds for the breath of God to blow through us today as we celebrate the Thomas mass.

PRELUDE *C Major Toccata* by Pachelbel

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1-21

Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity in multiple languages.

A reading from Acts.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new

wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷“In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ ”

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG *Spirit of Gentleness* (ELW 396)

Refrain

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow through the wilderness calling and free;
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

- 1 You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
"Awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings." *Refrain*
- 2 You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with idols and lies,
then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes. *Refrain*
- 3 You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;

and down in the city you called once again,
when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind. *Refrain*

- 4 You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.
From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams;
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions your people arise. *Refrain*

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GREETING (ELW p. 213)

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Alleluia! We thank you for all who, like Thomas, seek knowledge. Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

TIME OF STILLNESS

Not turning ourselves off in silence, but active stillness offering the distinct beauty of hearing God whisper your name.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

SECOND READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Hebrew word rendered as ruach means "spirit," "wind," or "breath." This reading plays on the different meanings of the word. Just as the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision are given new life, flesh, and breath (or spirit), so God will give the exiles God's own spirit and will bring them home to the land of Israel.

A reading from Ezekiel.

¹The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

⁷So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.”

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

²⁴How manifold are your | works, O LORD!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full | of your creatures.

²⁵**Yonder is the sea, great and wide, with its swarms too man- | y to number,
living things both | small and great.**

²⁶There go the ships | to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you made for the | sport of it.

²⁷**All of them | look to you
to give them their food | in due season. R**

²⁸You give it to them; they | gather it;
you open your hand, and they are filled | with good things.

²⁹**When you hide your face, | they are terrified;
when you take away their breath, they die and return | to their dust.**

³⁰You send forth your Spirit, and they | are created;
and so you renew the face | of the earth.

³¹**May the glory of the LORD en- | dure forever;
O LORD, rejoice in | all your works. R**

³²You look at the earth | and it trembles;
you touch the mountains | and they smoke.

³³**I will sing to the LORD as long | as I live;
I will praise my God while I | have my being.**

³⁴May these words of | mine please God.
I will rejoice | in the LORD.

^{35b}**Bless the LORD, | O my soul.
Hal- | lelujah! R**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love.
Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

While speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” and describes the difference the Spirit will make in their lives and in the world.

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said,] ²⁶“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{16:4b}“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

DAY OF PENTECOST

After the Wind and Fire

Jesus had his own way of urging hearers to “not miss the forest for the trees.” Recall some of his familiar lines: “You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24), “Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?” (Mark 8:18), or “Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41). Look deeply. Listen carefully. Then pay attention to what is most important.

Attention-grabbing as the wonders on the Day of Pentecost may be—a house filled with rushing wind, tongues of fire alighting on the heads of apostles, and the whirling of alien languages from stupefied mouths—take care to not let their bewildering extraordinariness blunt the true and greater wonder of this gospel event: the Advocate comes.

All the times and events of Jesus' life—among close followers, watchers from afar, believers as well as doubters; the astounding miracles, puzzling parables, curious teachings, and scandalous associations—were for one purpose only: to open to all of them, to the whole world, the mercy and love of God.

But Jesus will not be at hand for long in the room, at the table, on the road and hillside, at the temple or synagogue, in the boat. The sound of his voice will become a memory; the image of his face will fade from sight. So, what happens when the hopeful days with Jesus end?

The Advocate comes! Yes, we retell the story now of an extraordinary moment of one ancient day on Pentecost, but oh, the greater, true gospel wonder is the ever-extraordinary presence of Jesus' Spirit bringing us hope and the way of God's mercy and love meant for, given to, and enduring in the world forever. Pray that we have eyes to see it and ears to hear of it.

In celebration of this day so often proclaimed as the birth of the church. We open up our space for exploration. A time to explore what we do and why we do what we do. There are several options available during this 20 minutes of open space. You may spend it all at one station or visit as many as possible, it is up to you.

As you hear the music begin for our hymn, please return to your seats to conclude the remainder of our service. The various stations will remain available to you even after the service has concluded.

OPEN TIME

The congregation is invited to spend the next 20 minutes participating in any of the following options: (Please keep conversations to a minimum in respect for those praying and meditating.)

Tour the nave - Ecclesiastical Architecture and Strange Names (organ side back)

Limitless life - Baptismal font

Re-align your heart with God's, exploring offering - Pulpit

Why and what we do, Liturgy and God's Service - front organ side

Prayers - Narthex windows

The Cross - Altar

HYMN OF THE DAY *Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading* (ELW 401)

1 Gracious Spirit, heed our pleading,
fashion us all anew.
It's your leading that we're needing,
help us to follow you.

Refrain

Come, come, come, Holy Spirit, come.
Come, come, come, Holy Spirit, come.

- 2 Come to teach us, come to nourish
those who believe in Christ.
Bless the faithful, may they flourish,
strengthened by grace unpriced. *Refrain*

- 3 Guide our thinking and our speaking
done in your holy name.
Motivate all in their seeking,
freeing from guilt and shame. *Refrain*

- 4 Not mere knowledge, but discernment,
nor rootless liberty;
turn disquiet to contentment,
doubt into certainty. *Refrain*

- 5 Keep us fervent in our witness;
unswayed by earth's allure.
Ever grant us zealous fitness,
which you alone assure. *Refrain*

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PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

We pray for the church universal, for its ministries, and for the spread of the gospel. Shower your Spirit upon Sunday school students, confirmands, and the newly baptized. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

For the earth, our precious home. We give thanks for the diversity of plant and animal life on our planet. Empower us by your Spirit to be wise and faithful stewards of all you have made. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

For the nations and those who govern. Give those in authority understanding hearts, that they work together to bring justice and peace on earth. Grant all who vote in elections wisdom and discernment. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

For those in need around the world: for victims of crimes, for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, for those who are incarcerated. For all who suffer in any way (especially Ralph, Shirley, Jim, Melissa, Heather, Lars, Anna, Gene, Chris, Susan, Cheryl, and these others we name now in our hearts and with our voices. (pause for names to be spoken) . God of grace,

hear our prayer.

For this congregation and its ministries: for those who plan and lead worship, for acolytes and communion servers, for readers and tech ministers, for all who prepare and clean our worship space. May our worship be pleasing in your sight. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

We remember the faithful departed. Give us thankful hearts for those who have gone before us in the faith. At the last day, breathe new life into our dry bones, that we might feast forever with all the saints in light. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.
Amen.

PEACE (ELW p. 217)

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

THANKSGIVING

We give thanks for the saving Word and all the gifts of God.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD (ELW p. 220)

Let us pray.

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (ELW p. 221)

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (ELW p. 221)

BLESSING

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The God of resurrection power,
the Christ of unending joy,
and the Spirit of Easter hope

✙ bless you now and always.

Amen.

SENDING SONG *God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind* (ELW 400)

1 God of tempest, God of whirlwind,
as on Pentecost descend!
Drive us out from sheltered comfort;
past these walls your people send!
Sweep us into costly service,
there with Christ to bear the cross,
there with Christ to bear the cross!

2 God of blazing, God of burning,
all that blocks your purpose, purge!
Through your church, Christ's living Body,
let your flaming Spirit surge!
Where deceit conceals injustice,
kindle us to speak your truth,
kindle us to speak your truth!

3 God of earthquake, God of thunder,
shake us loose from lethargy!
Break the chains of sin asunder,
for earth's healing set us free!
Crumble walls that still divide us;
make us one in Christ our Lord,
make us one in Christ our Lord!

4 God of passion, God unsleeping,
stir in us love's restlessness!
Where the people cry in anguish,
may we share your heart's distress.
Rouse us from content with evil;
claim us for your kingdom's work,
claim us for your kingdom's work!

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DISMISSAL

Alleluia! Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Upcoming Commemorations

Helena, mother of Constantine, died around 330

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

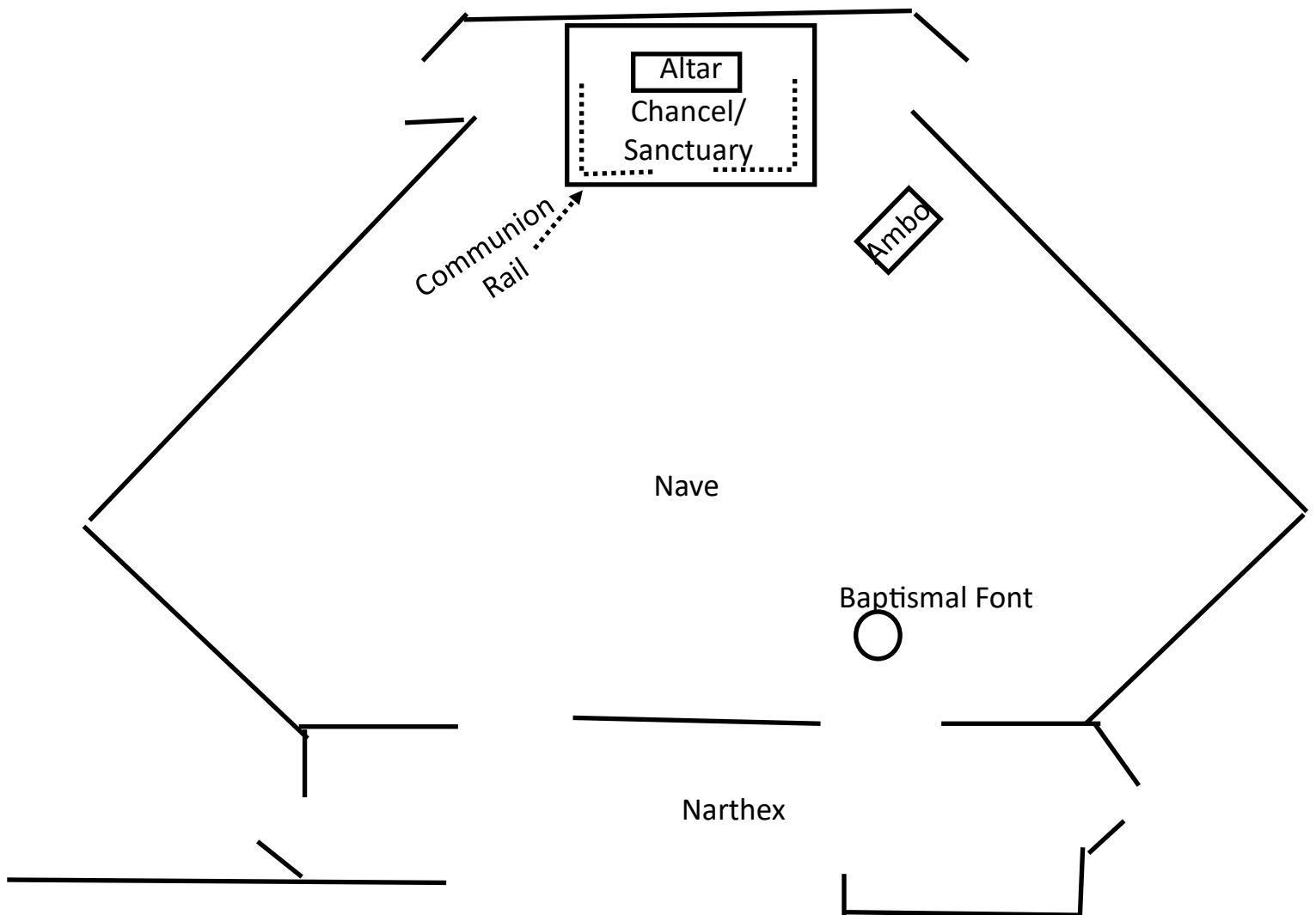
Influenced by her son to become Christian, Helena (or Helen) lived an exemplary life of faith. She is also remembered for traveling through Palestine building churches on the sites she believed to be associated with Christ's life.

Nicolaus Copernicus, died 1543; Leonhard Euler, died 1783; scientists

Friday, May 24, 2024

These two men were both scientists who helped to explain the wonders of God's universe. Copernicus is best known for promoting the idea that the sun, not the earth, is at the center of our solar system. Euler was one of the founders of pure mathematics, and contributed to many other fields.

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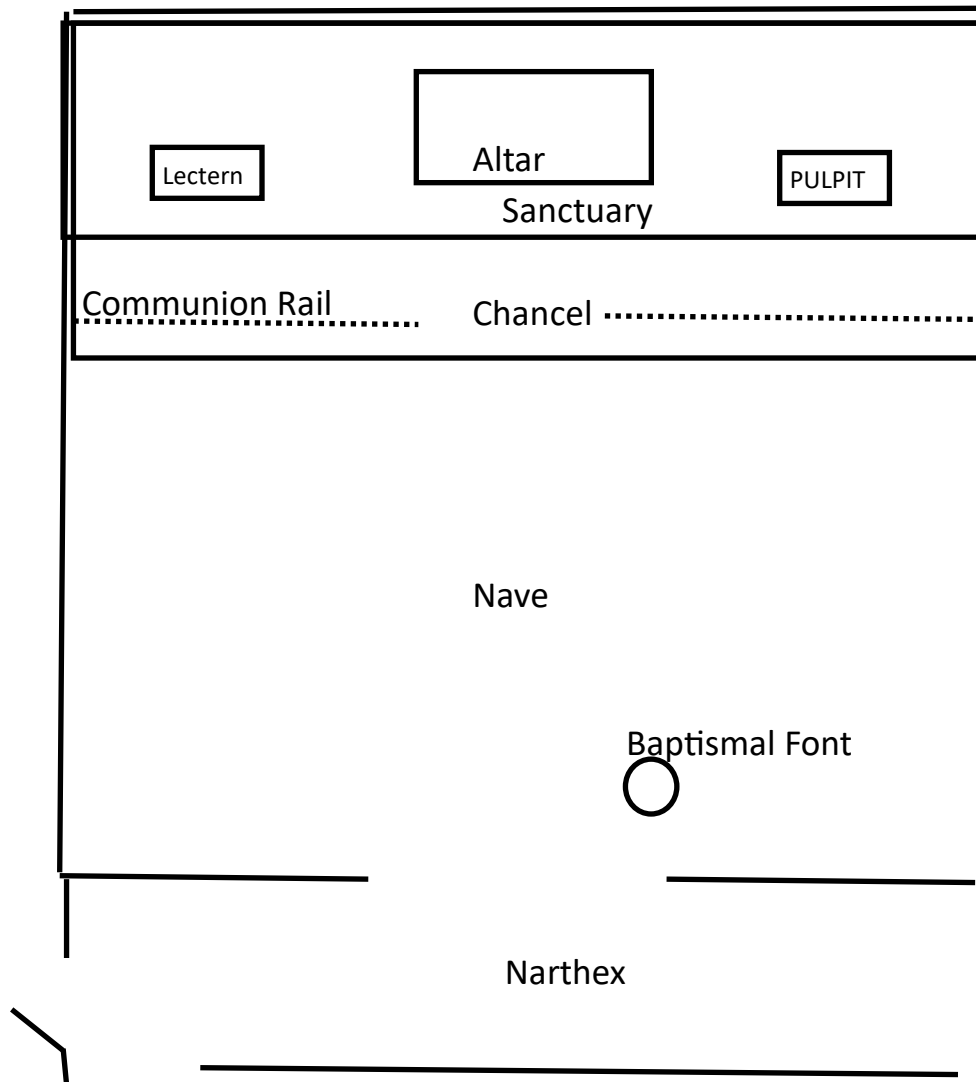
Ecclesiastical Architecture and Strange Names

(As used in our church– pictured above)

- ⚡ **Narthex**—A vestibule between the main entrance and the nave of the church. (From the Latin word “*vestibulum*” meaning “entrance court”.) The narthex is a specific kind of vestibule if it leads directly to the outside. **In the early church, the unbaptized faithful would be restricted to the narthex. Another purpose for the narthex, in early days, was to provide a meeting place between the clergy and civilians or females.** Today the narthex serves as a gathering place to greet and converse with others allowing for quiet prayer and contemplation in the nave prior to and following the service.
- ⚡ **Nave**—The central part of the church building where the congregation sits or stands. In Western churches, it is usually rectangular (*ours is not*) and separated from the sanctuary. **Derived from the Latin word *navis*” meaning “ship” because the nave resembled the shape of the deck of a ship; and also because of the church’s function as an “ark of salvation”, like “Noah’s Ark” or a refuge in the storm (Matthew 8:23–27, Mark 4:35–41, and Luke 8:22–25). See Liturgy– Kyrie.**

Ecclesiastical Architecture and Strange Names (cont.)

- ✦ **Baptismal Font**—Placed at the primary entrance to the nave the water in the baptismal font reinforces the sacrament of our Christian birth where God names us and claims us as God’s own children setting us free and at the same time commissioning us for ministry.
- ✦ **Pulpit/Ambo**— Reading desk. Placing and reading from a bible or lectionary of appropriate size on an ambo brings to visible expression the presence and importance of the word of God. Proclamation is aided when everyone in the assembly can see, and hear the person at the ambo. The proclamation of the word of God is honored by the creation of a single focal point.
- ✦ **Chancel**—The chancel is the area before the altar reserved for clergy and choir and often separated from the nave by a step. Beyond this is the sanctuary, on a raised step from the chancel.
- ✦ **Sanctuary**—The “holy place” containing the altar where the service is conducted, distinct from the nave. Usually is elevated. From the Latin word “sanctus” meaning “holy or set apart.” *In the medieval Church, it was a place of immunity from arrest for a fugitive.*
- ✦ **Altar**— The holy table of the Christian family. The common table of the assembly. The table itself is the primary symbol. It accommodates the bread and wine of the eucharist and those who minister around it.
- ✦ **Communion Rail**— a rail, usually a half-circle, bordering the Chancel, where the assembly gathers to kneel or stand as the meal is served. *The half-circle reminds us that each time we share this meal it is also eaten with all Christians throughout time and space. This second half of this circle extends out past our walls to them.*



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Chancel/Sanctuary

God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

(Exodus 3:4-5 NRS)

You aren't required to remove your shoes, but it is proper to pause just a moment and acknowledge that the ground onto which you are about to ascend (the chancel/sanctuary) is holy ground. Set aside and indeed where we do expect to meet God.

“God’s Service”- Why don’t we just call it worship? Martin Luther’s final written words, found on table after he died said, “We are beggars. This is true.” Luther was right. God has everything, we have nothing. Everything we do have already belongs to God – including our life itself. Regardless, we are forever the ones who receive and our forever abundant and creating God never tires of providing for our every need. We may come to give worship and praise but we leave always having been the one to receive. This is always God’s Service.

Why we do what we do. Why a liturgical service? The word “Liturgy” comes from the Greek leitourgia (λειτουργία), meaning “work of the people.” In ancient Greece, a liturgy was a public work performed by the people for the benefit of others. Therefore, a liturgical service is conceived so that all worshipers take an active part. Liturgy Connects Us to Others. God’s service is not intended to occur in isolation. Liturgy brings the community of faith together. Whenever people act together to pray, sing, confess, or hold silence, liturgy is experienced. Liturgy sets us free from decision making. It frees us to focus on the Triune God without wondering “how” to do it. It helps us have an experience of Christ and commune with God intimately. It challenges our independence, willfulness, controlling tendencies, and individualism.

Further symbolism and meaning in this space.

† Candles

- ✦ **Eternal flame** – This red candle hanging near the ambo in front of the church is always burning and signifies the eternal presence of God in the Church.
- ✦ **Altar Candles** – Lit from a flame brought in at the beginning of the service signifying the light of Christ present in the church.
 - ✧ Candles are lit from the altar out and extinguished from the outside in.
 - ✧ Before the final candle is extinguished the acolyte taper is lit and then carried out signifying the light of Christ preceding the assembly in mission to the world.
- ✦ **Paschal Candle** – Large single candle usually placed by the baptismal font, but in front of the church during the 50 days of Easter. When in use, it is always the first candle lit and the last extinguished.
 - ✧ At the Easter Vigil service, a new fire is kindled, and the paschal candle is lighted, representing the Risen Christ, the Light of the world.
 - ✧ Symbolically, this is the fire from which all light is ignited. Traditionally, before lighting the candle from the new fire, the candle is inscribed with a cross, an *alpha* and *omega*, and the current year. This reinforces the point that Christ is present among us now and throughout eternity.
 - ✧ In addition to the Easter Season this candle is lit at baptisms and funerals and in this way acts as a visual reminder of the integral connection between Baptism and Easter. For funerals, the paschal candle is lighted and placed in its stand at the head of the casket during the funeral rite. In a visual way, the paschal candle visually proclaims the message of Romans 6:3-5 (*used at the beginning of the burial liturgy*): "In our Baptism we have already died and been raised with Christ."

The Kyrie

A prayer for God's mercy to fill the church and the world.

κύριε, σῶσον – Kyrie Eleison –

Lord, have mercy or Lord Save!



So labeled after the words spoken by the disciples in Matthew's account of the stilling of the storm in the original Greek documents. Literally "Kyrie Eleison."

“²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷ They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" *Mat 8:23-27 (NRSV)*

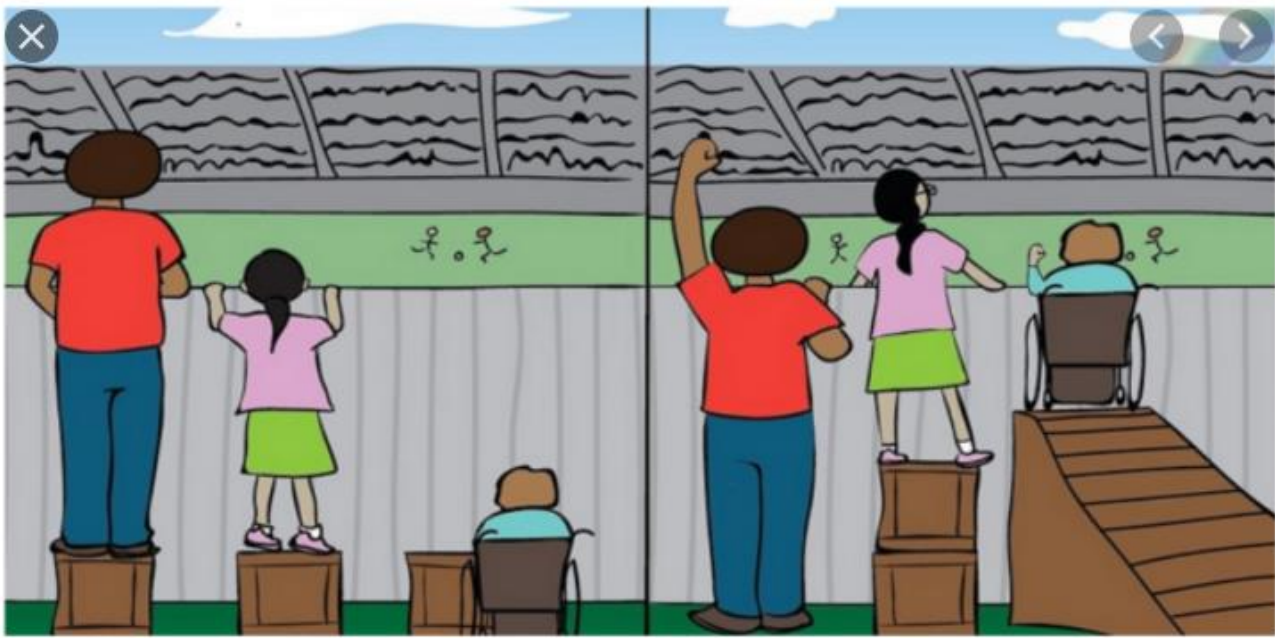


The imagery: Remember how the space in which we gather in the church is called the Nave (*Latin for Ship*). During this early liturgy we gather with the disciples in the boat (our nave) as the storm of the world rages around us. Realizing our vulnerability, and inability to save ourselves we too cry out to Jesus, "Lord, save us."

Kyrie Eleison!

Where in our world is God's mercy needed today? Write it down as a prayer and toss it into our bailing bucket.





Equality

Equity

1234 x 792

The world produces enough food for all, but more than 800 million people around the world face chronic hunger. In our world not all things are equal, but if they were, would that be fair or equitable to all? Or like this picture illustrates, are equality and equity often two different things?

Pray that we, our neighbors and our leaders might work toward a just and fair life for all?

Prayers

Russia and Ukraine are at war.

Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Libya, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Colombia, and Mali are currently in civil wars.

Mexico is at war with the drug cartels in the country and that is only the beginning.

There are 32 countries currently at war.

What other headlines, world events, U.S. events, state or local events need our prayer?

What about your neighbors and friends right here?

What about prayers of gratitude for the great abundance God provides?

What about gratitude for something God has done in your life? A family member? A Neighbor?

What about the people God places in our lives?

Take a moment to pray.

Offering

The offering and the Eucharist are the high point of our liturgy. The offering is the point where you, in an act of worship, can most fully participate in this service by giving back to God something we value. We proclaim and witness to a God of abundance. Everything we have belongs to God. We are called to be stewards of God's great abundance. How much of what God gives us do we need to keep? And how much can we share with our neighbor?

Through seemingly small and perhaps unimpressive beginnings, yet with a power beyond our understanding we are empowered to be generous stewards of God's abundance. In humble thanksgiving for the abundance that God asks us to steward, we pray that God receive our lives and these gifts we return for the sake of the world.

If you have offering to share today, please place it in the basket, and be aware of how this act of generosity and love for others helps to re-align your heart with God's.



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“In baptism Jesus Christ derails your death and undoes the limits of your life.”

Marc Olson: A Lutheran Welcome to Baptism, p.9.

The waters of baptism are a physical sign and reminder that we are chosen by God – naming and claiming us as God’s own children.

We receive God’s love, blessings and abundant gifts not because we are good but because we are God’s.



Dip your finger in the water and trace a cross on your forehead to remember you are God’s beloved child.

**The cross means there is no place in your life that Jesus will not show up.
Grace like water flows downhill and pools at the foot of the cross**

“God, who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet He seems sometimes to be absent. If we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present.”

**-Thomas Merton,
*No Man is an Island***

Write on a piece of paper a time in your life when you felt God was not present or a time when you felt God's presence most real and leave it at the foot of the cross.

