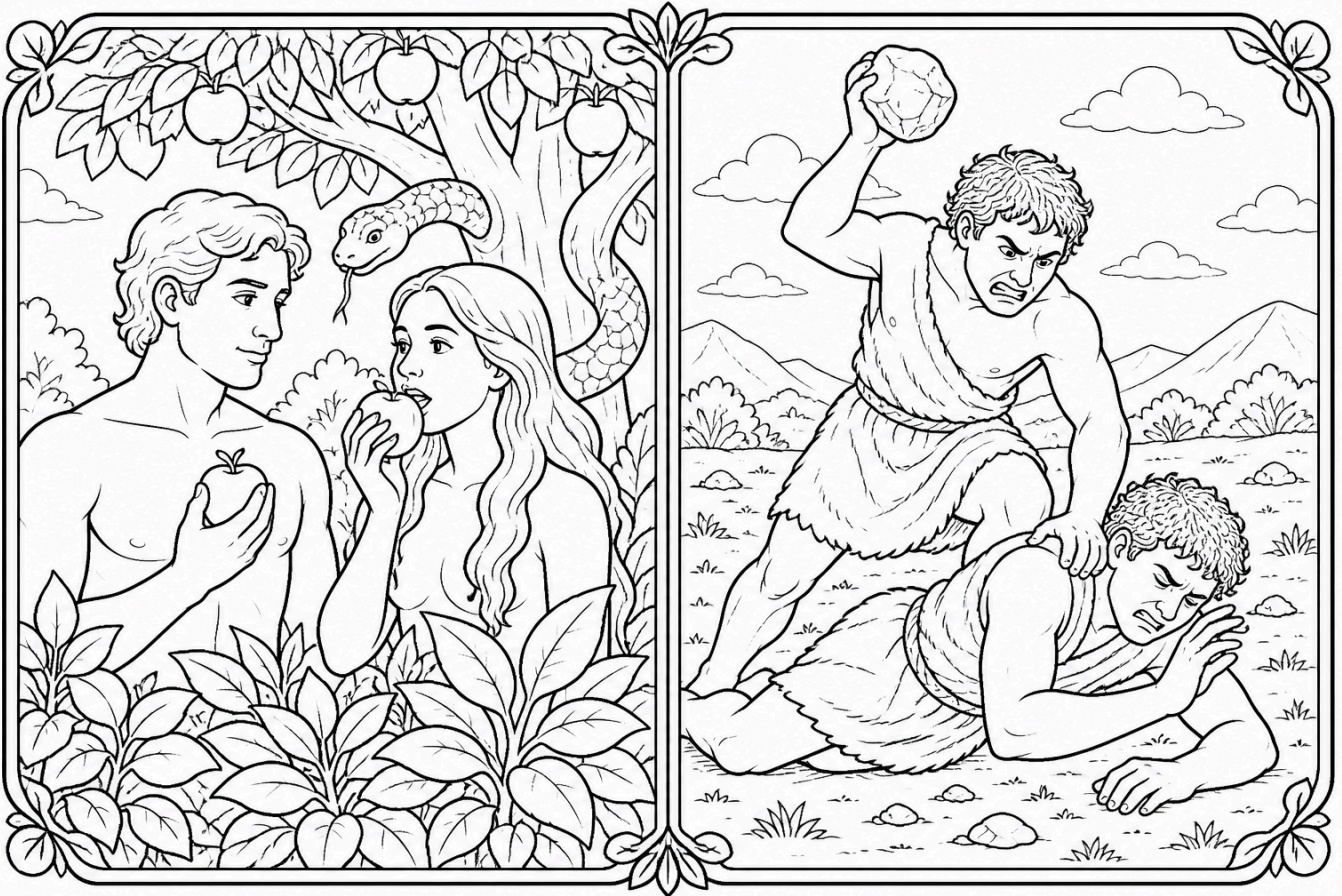




TREE OF LIFE

Christian Fellowship

“for Healing, Obedience, & Peace on Earth” (H.O.P.E.)



Ascension of Our Lord | 17 May 2026

“Knowledge of Beauty & Ugliness”

Genesis 3:1—5:32

✠ The Way of Jesus Liturgy ✠

Invocation

Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, ^{Gen 1:1} ♦ **you created us to “serve and protect” your creation.** ^{Gen 2:15} ♦ **But we destroy your creation** ^{Rev 11:18} ♦ **through Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence.** ^{Gen 3:1—4:17} ♦ **So you send your Word in the flesh of your Son Jesus,** ^{John 1:14} **who says,** ♦ **“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived! Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me!”** ^{Matt 4:17, 16:24} ♦ **And you baptize us with your Holy Spirit** ^{Acts 1:5} ♦ **so we might care for all your creation by following Jesus’s Way of “faith, hope, and love.”** ^{1 Cor 13:13}

Hear what Jesus says, ♦ **“Love the Lord your Creator with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.** ♦ This is the first and great command. And the second is like it: ♦ **Love your neighbor as yourself.”** ^{Matt 22:37-39}

Processional Song — *“O Christ, When You Ascended” (tune: LSB 478)*

- ♫ *O Christ, when you ascended, you took your rightful throne; Your time on earth had ended — yet we weren't left alone. You reign o'er earth and heaven; your Spirit guides our way. Your prayers uphold your people; you're with your church each day. ♪*
- ♫ *We look at earthly rulers and see what they command: We note their years of power, the borders of their land. Yet, Lord, you are not bounded by things like time and space; Your reign is never-ending, you rule in every place. ♪*
- ♫ *We're tempted. Lord, to leave you in stories nicely told; Sometimes we don't believe you and say your ways are old. Sometimes we feel so lonely and live in doubt and fear — But your ascension means, Lord, you're present with us here. ♪*
- ♫ *It's often quite a challenge to follow in your Way; We're easily distracted! It's hard, Lord, to obey. Sometimes we give you Sundays — an hour, maybe two — But your ascension means, Lord, all life belongs to you. ♪*
- ♫ *One day, O Lord, we'll know you, as we are fully known; One day this world of sinners will bow before your throne. One day, God's whole creation will sing and praise your name; On earth as now in heaven, we'll celebrate your reign. ♪*

Ascension Litany

Jesus has ascended to the Father! ♦ **He is Lord of all creation! Alleluia!**
All authority in heaven and earth ♦ **has been given to Jesus!**
He is now present throughout creation! ♦ **He will be with us always!**
We are his Church, ♦ **his Body on earth!**
We wait for his coming! ♦ **He will return through his Spirit!**
We wait for his coming! ♦ **He will judge and restore all creation! Alleluia!**

Prayer of the Day

Jesus says, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” ^{Matt 18:20}

(the Christ candle is lit to remind us that Jesus is coming among us)

♫ *All hail the power of Jesus’ name! Let all before him fall. Lay down to him all pow’r and fame, and crown him Lord of all. Lay down to him all pow’r and fame, and crown him Lord of all! ♪ (LSB 549)*

The Lord Jesus be with you. ♦ **And also with you.** ♦ Let us pray. Heavenly Father,

We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every Word from the Lord.** ^{Matt 4:4}

Epistle — 2 Corinthians 1:12—2:11

The Epistle reading comes from 2 Corinthians 1. ♦ **“Those who listen will live.”** ^{John 5:25}

We do not live on bread alone, ♦ **but on every Word from the Lord.** ^{Matt 4:4}

† Holy Gospel † Matthew 6:19-34

We stand for the word of Jesus. ♪ *Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia, alleluia.* ♪ (LSB 156)

The holy Gospel comes from Matthew 6. ♦ **“Those who listen will live.”** ^{John 5:25}

“If you have ears, then listen!” ^{Matt 13:9} ♦ **Lord, help us to practice your Word.** ^{Matt 7:24}

Message

† Repentance — The Way of Hope †

Confronting Our Past

Jesus says, “I know what you do. I search minds and hearts and I will give to each of you according to your practices.” ^{Rev 2:19, 23} Remove the log from your own eye!” ^{Matt 7:5}
(silence for reflection)

For prostituting ourselves with the false gods of Civilization, ^{Ex 20:3} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For trusting the works of human hands, especially money, ^{Ex 20:4} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For being hypocrites who misrepresent your name, ^{Ex 20:7} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For overworking land, animals, and each other, ^{Ex 20:8} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For not respecting our fathers and mothers in Christ, ^{Ex 20:12} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For being violent to our bodies and your creation, ^{Ex 20:13} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For degrading ourselves and others with our sexuality, ^{Ex 20:14} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For trying to possess and control your creation, ^{Ex 20:15} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For not being vulnerable and honest with others, ^{Ex 20:16} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

For competing with others and desiring more, ^{Ex 20:17} ♦ **Father, forgive us.**

Jesus says, “Enter through the narrow Way. Because the Way of Destruction is wide and easy ♦ **and many enter through it.** ♦ But the Way of Life is narrow and difficult ♦ **and few find it.** ^{Matt 7:13-14} ♦ Whoever does not disown his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even his own soul, ♦ **cannot be my disciple.** ♦ Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me ♦ **cannot be my disciple.”** ^{Luke 14:26-27}

♪ *Lord Father we have wandered and hidden from your face. Rescue your whole creation with your almighty grace. From trust in wealth and weapons and blindness to your Way, save us and all creation with your own hands, we pray.* ♪ (LSB 449)

Jesus says, “I discipline those I love. Repent! I am standing at the door knocking!” ^{Rev 3:19-20} Come out of Civilization, my people, so you will not share in its sicknesses! ^{Rev 18:4}

Not one stone will be left standing, it will all be torn down.” ^{Matt 24:2} Will you turn away from Civilization’s Way of arrogance, fear, and violence and reaffirm your Baptism into Jesus’s Way of faith, hope, and love? ♦ **Yes, I renounce Civilization’s Way and pledge to follow Jesus.** ♦ Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.” ^{Matt 5:7} If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ^{Matt 6:14} Put your sword away. If you take up the sword, you will die by the sword.” ^{Matt 26:52} Will you release all debts and grudges that you hold against anyone—including every member of

this church? ♦ **Yes, I forgive all those who have hurt me, frustrated me, or owe me anything.** ♦ Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven. Get up and walk!” ^{Matt 9:5} Remember what you have heard and obey it!” ^{Rev 3:3} † **Amen.**

Song of the Day — **“One Person’s Sin Changed Every Life” (tune: LSB 570)**

- ♫ *One person's sin changed every life; When Adam strayed, we too were lost. The world soon filled with death and strife And every person bears the cost.* ♪
- ♫ *Not satisfied with what you gave, Your people sought to be like you. Those early humans disobeyed — Their story is our story, too.* ♪
- ♫ *Then, God, in love you sent your Son, For as in Adam we did fall, So through the faithfulness of One, Salvation was your gift to all.* ♪
- ♫ *O God, we've seen what death can do, And now with joy we know rebirth. In Jesus Christ, you make us new And give your life for all the earth.* ♪

Waiting on the Creator

- ♫ *Our Father, bring your Rule and will to earth. Give what we need for worry-free rebirth. Bring peace among us and forgive us too, as we forgive and love in all we do.*
- ♫ *Protect us from all things that will mislead. Keep us from selfishness, violence, and greed. We place our lives into your hands this day. Teach us to listen and to walk your Way. Amen.* ♪ (LSB 637)

(incense is lit to symbolize our prayers ascending to God and as its smell fills this space we are reminded of his presence among us)

Jesus says, “Learn from the birds. They do not store things up and your heavenly Father feeds them.” ^{Matt 6:26} Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness and everything you need will be given to you. Do not worry about tomorrow. ^{Matt 6:33-34} Stay awake and pray so you will not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ^{Matt 26:41}

*In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, set us apart from Civilization in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Take charge of our lives and all those in authority. Use everything that happens to bring your good judgment and healing upon all creation. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, provide for us, protect us, and heal our brokenness. Especially this day we remember John Espino, Bill Mellott, Cebra Sims, and those we name in our hearts... Father, give us exactly what we need this day and teach us to be content with that. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, forgive us and free us from all that enslaves us. Help us to walk away from our anxieties, traumas, and addictions to Civilization’s Way, so we may walk in Jesus’s Way. Empower us to love and forgive everyone, even our enemies, in the way you have loved and forgiven us. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, humble us and remind us that we have no strength apart from you. Stay with us in difficult times and save us from our selfishness. Comfort us in the certain hope that all your creation and children will be renewed and raised from the dead. *In peace, let us pray to the Lord, ♫ **Lord have mercy.** ♫* Father, help us to let go and surrender everything into your loving hands, trusting that you “work all things for the good of those who love you.” ^{Rom 8:28} ♦ **“Our Father in Heaven, may your name be holy, may your Kingdom come, and may your will be done—on Earth as in Heaven. Give us this day what we need for today. Forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. Do not abandon us when**

we are tempted, but pull us away from what is evil. For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours—now and forever.” ^{Matt 6:9-13} † Amen.

† Communion — The Way of Love †

Sharing the Lord’s Peace

Jesus says, “Before you come to the Lord’s altar, **◆ make peace with each other.**” ^{Matt 5:24}
Blessed are the peacemakers, **◆ for they will be called the Creator’s children.**” ^{Matt 5:9}

Offering & Musical Offering

Jesus says, “Do not store up things on earth. ^{Matt 6:19} To be my disciple you must give up all you own. ^{Luke 14:33} Sell your possessions, give to the poor, and you will have a storage in heaven.” ^{Matt 19:21} We offer everything to the Lord, as we offer gifts to this church.

Pledge of Allegiance

♩ We come before you, Lord, to bow. We lay our lives at your feet now. All things are yours, we own nothing! Our lives are in your hands this day. Give what we need, O Lord, we pray. Please protect us, provide for us! Watch over us, ever with us, always love us! *♩ (LSB 816)* Jesus says, “If you pledge your allegiance to me before others, then I will pledge my allegiance to you before my heavenly Father.” ^{Matt 10:32}

◆ I pledge allegiance to one God, the all-powerful Father, who is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible.

◆ I pledge allegiance to one Lord, Jesus Christ, who is God’s only Son. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He loved and he suffered. Under Pontius Pilate, he was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he was raised from the dead. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. His Kingdom will not end.

◆ I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the baptism for forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life in the age to come. † Amen.

Thanksgiving — Εὐχαριστία

Let us give thanks to our Creator! **◆ It is right to give him thanks and praise!**

Father, we praise and thank you, **◆ for you provide, protect, love, and renew us and all creation!** **◆** We are grateful for all that you give, especially for Sarah Martin’s birthday... Father, we thank you for marrying yourself to us and uniting Heaven and Earth, Spirit and Flesh, and Christ and the Church through your Son Jesus! ^{Eph 5:32}

♩ I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives! He lives to silence all my fears, he lives to wipe away my tears. ♩ He lives to give me daily breath, he lives and I will conquer death. He lives my body to repair, he lives to keep me in his care. ♩ (LSB 461)

† Words of Our Lord Jesus †

Jesus says, “Whoever humbles himself is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” ^{Matt 18:4} On the night before our Lord Jesus was crucified, he humbly washed the feet of his students and enemies. Jesus said, **◆ “I have given you an example. Do as I have done**

for you. Love others. In the same way I have loved you, love others. By this all will know that you are my disciples: if you love each other.” ^{John 13:15, 34-35} ♦ During supper, Jesus then took the bread and broke it. He gave it to them, saying, “This is my † body, given for you. Do the same in my memory.” After supper, Jesus then took the cup and gave thanks. He said, “This is my † blood of the covenant, poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins. Do the same in my memory.” ^{Matt 26:26-28, Luke 22:19-20}

♫ Oh come Lord Jesus come and dine and give yourself through bread and wine. Feed us so we may have new birth, and bring your rule ov'r all the earth. Come now, come now! Our Lord Jesus and bring your healing love to us! ♪ (LSB 357)

Sharing the Bread & Wine

Jesus says, “I am the Bread of Life. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me.” ^{John 6:51, 56} As we feed on the Bread of Life ♦ **we are made members of Christ’s Body.** ^{1 Cor 10:16-17} ♦ We no longer live for ourselves ♦ **but Christ lives within us.** ^{Gal 2:20} ♦ We invite all Baptized members of the universal Church, who give their undivided allegiance to Jesus and are at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us ♦ **as the Creator’s Lamb mysteriously gives himself to us in, with, and under this bread, wine, and communion.**

REFRAIN: ♫ This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. ♫ ♫ Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. (REFRAIN) ♫ Power, riches, wisdom and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are his. (REFRAIN) ♫ Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation. Blessing, honor, glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. (REFRAIN) ♫ For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. (REFRAIN) ♫ (LSB 155)

Song — “When Cain Killed Abel” (tune: LSB 717)

- ♫ When Cain killed Abel in a fight and Jacob stole another’s right, when Joseph’s brothers gave him chase, God wept, and mourned their fall from grace. In arrogance we lift ourselves, then filled with fear our violence kills. ♫*
- ♫ In every family, small or great, when jealousy twists love to hate and rivals turn to enemies, God weeps at our hostilities. In arrogance we lift ourselves, then filled with fear our violence kills. ♫*
- ♫ And when in church and world today such feelings still come into play, when brothers, sisters stand apart, God weeps for every broken heart. In arrogance we lift ourselves, then filled with fear our violence kills. ♫*
- ♫ Good Christians, join in God's lament, weep now and mourn, be penitent, and pray to God: Forgive us all. Restore us as before our fall. In arrogance we lift ourselves, then filled with fear our violence kills. ♫*

Ἀγάπη Feast & Text Discussion

Jesus says, “Do you love me? ♦ **Then feed my sheep.**” ^{John 21:17} ♦ We now move to our Bible study room to continue devoting ourselves ♦ **“to the Apostles’ teaching, to communion with each other, to the sharing of bread, and to prayer.”** ^{Acts 2:42}

Sent to “Do the Same in My Memory”

Jesus says, “Love your enemies ♦ **so you will be children of your heavenly Father.**
^{Matt 5:44-45} ♦ Go proclaim, ♦ **the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived!** ♦ Freely you have
received from the Creator, ♦ **now freely you must give.** ^{Matt 10:7-8} ♦ I am sending you
like sheep among wolves, ♦ **so be as clever as serpents and as non-violent as doves.**
^{Matt 10:16} ♦ Make disciples of all nations, ♦ **baptizing and teaching them to obey
everything I have commanded.** ^{Matt 28:19-20} ♦ Do not be afraid to suffer! ♦ **Be faithful
through death and I will give you the crown of life.”** ^{Rev 2:10} † Amen.

♪ *The day of resurrection! May our hearts be set right! The Lord is raised to new
life, in resurrection light. And list'ning to his teachings, may we learn to obey, his
word of “Follow me!” that calls out to us today.* ♪ (LSB 478)

Blessing

Jesus says, “Blessed are you who are poor, for the Creator’s Kingdom is yours. ^{Luke 6:20}
Blessed are your eyes, because they see. Blessed are your ears, because they listen. <sup>Matt
13:16</sup> Blessed are those who listen to the Creator’s Word and obey it.” ^{Luke 11:28} † Amen.

- * Faith & Film: “Seven” (May 18, 25) | “Two Popes” (Jun 1, 8) | “Adaptation” (Jun 15, 22)
- * Growing in H.O.P.E.: Weds @ 5:30 pm (early start!) @ DG, May 20, 27, Jun 3 (potluck), 10,
17, 24 — applying the week’s sermon text — food & fellowship starts at 5:00 pm
- * Game Night: @ DG (6 pm, BYOB), Jun 12, Jul 10
- * Vacation Bible School: Fri, Jun 19, 5:30 - 8:00 pm | Sat, Jun 20, 9 am - 1:30 pm
- * Annual Congregational Meeting: Sunday, June 14 | new Council will be appointed, turn in
any Steward nominations ASAP
- * Pentecost Festival: Sun, May 24, 10 am @ DG, lunch following worship

Weekly Calendar | May 17 - 24, 2026

Sun, May 17	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast Genesis 3:1—5:32
Mon, May 18	6:00 pm	Faith & Film
Wed, May 20	5:30 pm	Growing in H.O.P.E. @ DG
Sat, May 23	7-9 am	Breakfast & Devotion
Sun, May 24	9:30 am	Liturgy & Αγάπη Feast Genesis 6:1—9:28

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