

First Reading: Acts 9:1–22

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹and taking food, he was strengthened.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. ²⁰And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Epistle: Revelation 5:8–14

⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,

"Worthy are you to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you
ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people
and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and
priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth."

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Holy Gospel: John 21:1–14

¹After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

They knew it was the Lord



About the Cover: The disciples knew it was the risen Lord upon arriving onshore. The same Lord who fed five thousand now feeds His disciples this breakfast meal of bread and fish. The Lord was unmistakable by His Word and what He did. So also, the same risen Lord continues to speak to us and feed us this day. In the Lord's Supper, He feeds us with His very body and blood given and shed for us. The risen Lord is unmistakable in His forgiveness won on the cross and offered freely to us!

St. John's Lutheran Church (LCMS)
8948 N 1900 Ave Geneseo, IL 61254
309-949-2516

May 1, 2022 **Third Sunday of Easter**

Divine Service Setting Four (Lutheran Service Book, p. 203)

Hymn of Invocation 469 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

Invocation and Versicles (p. 203)

Introit *Psalm 145:4-7, 9; antiphon: v. 10*

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!
**One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.**

On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
**They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.**

They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
**The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!

The Kyrie (p. 204)

Salutation and Collect of the Day (p. 205)

P O God, through the humiliation of Your Son You raised up
the fallen world. Grant to Your faithful people, rescued from
the peril of everlasting death, perpetual gladness and eternal
joys; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
G Amen.

Readings (on back of bulletin)

Gradual *adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6*

Christ has risen from the dead.
[God the Father] has crowned him with glory and honor.
**He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
he has put all things under his feet.**

Alleluia and Verse 952 Alleluia—II

Alleluia: Cantor - then All Repeat;
*Cantor: Verse;
Final Alleluia: All

Nicene Creed (p. 206)

Hymn of the Day 483 With High Delight Let Us Unite

Sermon

Prayer of the Church

After each petition:

P Lord, in Your mercy,
G hear our prayer.

The prayers conclude:

P ...one God forever.
G Amen.

Presentation of the Offering

Service of the Sacrament (p. 208)

(See attendance pad for our policy for receiving Holy Communion.)

Distribution Hymns

810 O God of God, O Light of Light
466 Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia

Nunc Dimittis (p. 211)

Hymn to Depart 478 The Day of Resurrection

**A person who sings solo verses or passages to which the congregation responds.*

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH-LCMS

churchoffice@stjohnsgeneseo.org
Website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org
https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo

**HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE**

Rev. Timothy Nerud **Pastor**
309-949-2516 (Office), 612-940-8138 (Cell), 309-949-2517 (Home)

Elder: Carl Freeman

Organist: Gail Tutt

Greeter: Janet Bertsons

Ushers:

Videographers: Joel Werling or Heidi Nerud

Today's Readings: First Reading: Acts 9:1-22
Epistle: Revelation 5:8-14
Gospel: John 21:1-14

WE PRAY: Holy Spirit, to whom the Trinitarian councils assigned the heralding of the reconciliation and the resurrection of Christ, supply us with courage to speak and live Christ, and add power to our proclamation in order that the Kingdom be extended by those whom You add to it, to the honor and glory of our risen and reigning Christ; who with You and the Father are one God with dominion over us forever. Amen

WELCOME TO ALL!

We are anxious to share with you the Christ-centered ministry at St. John's. Our Liturgy follows closely the pattern of Word and Lord's Supper handed down from the ancient Church. It is our hope that you will make the Church's life of prayer your own. If you have difficulty following our order of service, please ask someone sitting near you for assistance. We pray that you will receive rich spiritual blessings from your presence here. May the peace and power of our risen Christ be yours always.

IF YOU DESIRE, a visit or call from Pastor Nerud, please contact the church office (309-949-2516).

OFFICE HOURS

Terri's hours (Monday—Friday) 8 am—12 pm
Pastor's hours (Monday, Pastor's day off)
(Tuesday) 9 am—12 pm
(Thursday) 9 am—12 pm & 1 pm—4 pm
(Wednesday & Friday) please call ahead.

STREAM SERVICES <https://www.facebook.com/St.Johns.Geneseo/> and on the website: www.stjohnsgeneseo.org.

ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY

Sunday school—7 Adult Bible Class—12 Worship—54

OFFERING

Offering last Sunday \$2,119.00
Weekly 2022 Budget income needed \$4,084.71

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AT ST JOHN'S

Today	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship/Communion
Tuesday	7:00 pm	Adult Instruction class
Wednesday	5:00 pm	Confirmation
Thursday	NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER	
	6:00 pm	Elders' meeting
	7:00 pm	Men's Bible Study
Next Sunday	8:45 am	SS/Adult & Youth Bible Study
	10:00 am	Divine Worship

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Psalms 122:1

JOHN 21:6 – "He said to them, 'Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish." Won't the disciples ever learn? Jesus did this once before – when the odds seemed completely against it, the Lord gave them a command to let down the nets, a command that seemed crazy. But they complied and He blessed their obedience. When will we learn this lesson, too?

NEW ATTENDANCE PADS are at the end of each pew. Each family (members and guests) should sign using one line, naming all family members present. Return pad to the right end of your pew. Thanks for your help with this.

BRING US YOUR SHOES! Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo is raising funds for a Classical Lutheran school and is participating in fundraiser where there is nothing to buy or sell. All that is needed is your support and your old shoes. We are asking that members in churches in the Rock Island Circuit help support the school by collecting gently worn, used, and new shoes and bringing them to the shoe collection box placed at your church. Start in your family's closets and gather pairs of shoes that are out grown, out of style, or out of season—any size or type of shoe: work boots, high heels, children's shoes, athletic shoes, even flip flops. You can help even more by challenging yourself to collect 25 pairs of shoes, and then challenging your friends and family to do the same. At the end of the collection period, the shoes will be picked up and sent to developing countries to create job opportunities. Shoe drive fundraisers provide inventory to 4,000 micro-entrepreneurs who sell the shoes to support their families. Thank you for your help.

ENCHILADA SALE—Cristo Rey members are selling their fabulous enchiladas in either chicken or beef. Cost is \$15/dozen. Orders are picked up on Saturday, May 7th from 1-2 pm at Cristo Rey Lutheran Church. To place an order, call Jose Nunez (309) 373-1788. Proceeds go to Lutheran Women Missionary League.

WILL YOU HELP? The Elders' are looking for someone to be the 'Head Usher'. This person would secure ushers for each month (four ushers would serve a month at a time). We sincerely miss the work of Jim Dahl who served in this position for many, many years.

We also need several people who would be willing to use their singing abilities during the serving of Holy Communion.

Please contact the Office for more information on either job.

PREGNANCY RESOURCES' ANNUAL BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN is going now through Fathers' Day. Grab a baby bottle (sign the sheet with the # of bottles you take) and fill with coins, paper money or a check (make checks out to Pregnancy Resources). Return the bottle anytime before June 19th (please date when you returned your bottle). Easy Peasy!!

CALL DAY, APRIL 26 2022—Matthew G. Carlson, our seminary student, received a call for his Vicarage to Messiah Lutheran Church in Danville, CA. Please continue to pray for Matthew during this next year.

ALTAR FLOWERS—The **2022 Flower Chart is now on the bulletin board next to the restrooms**. Cost for weekly flowers are \$30 for two arrangements. We greatly appreciate those who help with providing flowers for Sunday worship services. **Please sign up for a Sunday.**

PRAYER MINISTRY

Remember God's work through missionaries on home service as you pray:

MISSION—Pray for the LCMS missionary families who will be on home service. Ask the Lord to keep them safe during their travels.

ST JOHN'S—**Mr. & Mrs. Donald Hock**—We offer before You our common request for the well-being of Your church throughout the world that it may be so guided and governed by Your good Spirit that all who profess themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth and hold the faith in unity of spirit in the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life. Specifically, we pray for Don, Sarah, and Joshua and ask Your blessings upon them.

ST. JOHN'S FAMILY—O Lord, You are the great Physician of soul and body. We pray that You would show mercy to Your servants:

Linda Aper	Lois Esterlein	Jim Rahn
Elizabeth Bjork	Betty Firch	Drew Schillinger
Jim Dahl	Arlyn Helke	Carolyn Werner
	Lynne Johnson	Marilyn Woods

Don Eggers (son of friend of Marilyn Woods)

Jodi Martin (daughter of Gary & Darla Johns)

Jon/Anita Clausing (missionaries in Kenya)

Marilyn Potts (wife of Cal Potts, former St. John Laborer for Christ)

Virginia Miller (mother of Jamie Werling)

Rev. Justin Kane (son of Sandra Kane)

Bill Erdman (brother of Bob Erdman)

MILITARY—We pray for those serving in our military and their families:

Mandy/Richard Davila (daughter/son-in-law of Linda Aper)

Luke/Nicole Thompson (son/daughter-in-law of John/Kindra Thompson)

Ken Willeford (husband of Alicia Willeford)

Karl Flynn (son of Mr/Mrs Paul Flynn)

Zachary/Tiffany Gardner (nephew/wife of Lois Esterlein)

Casey Powers Jr. (step son of Lisa Powers)

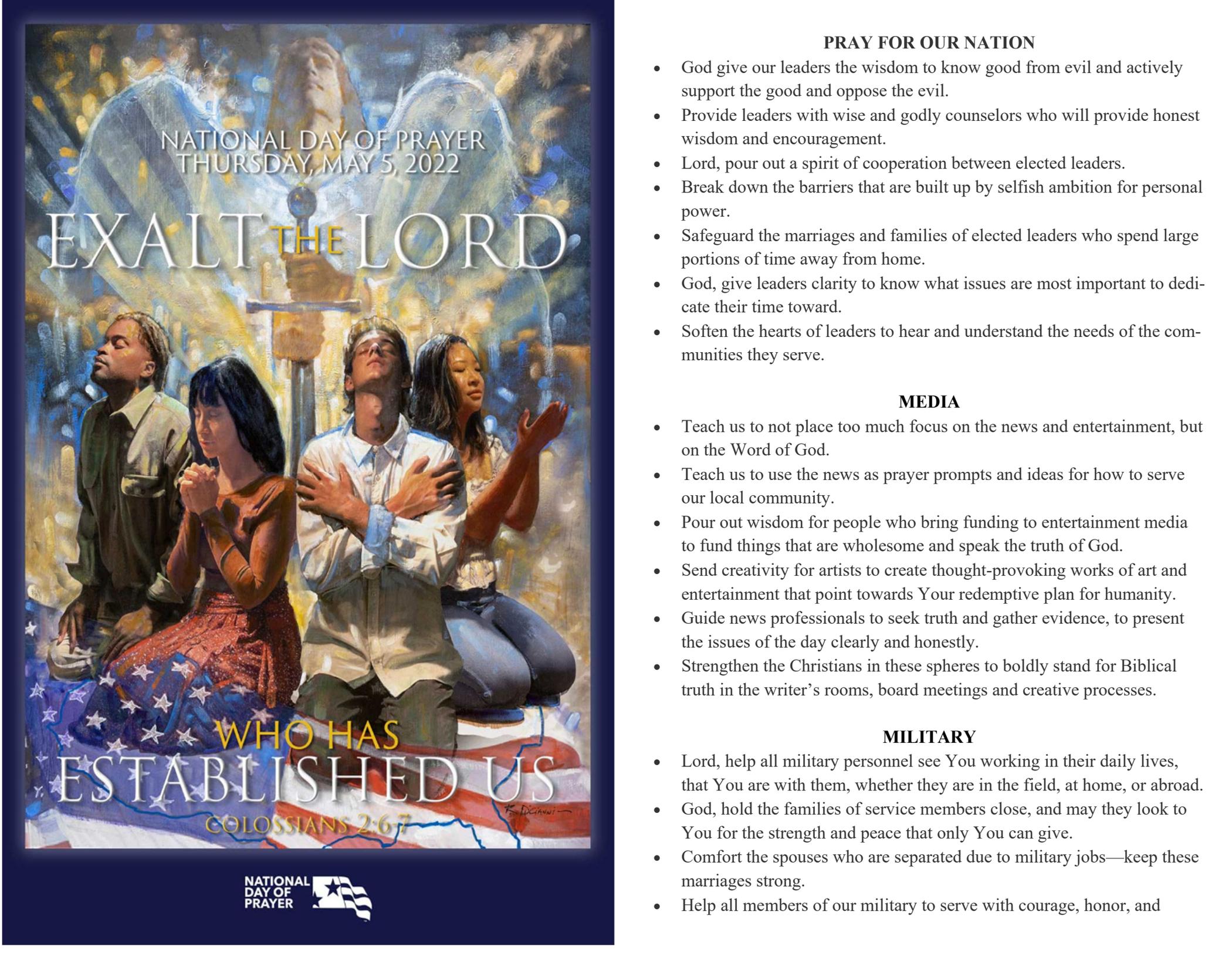
Brittany Loenser (daughter of Gabe Loenser)

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

“Let’s also recruit, instruct, and support more couples and families toward opening their homes to serve children in need. Multitudes—majorities, even—of foster families and adoptive parents confess Christ and consider themselves for-life. More foster parents—not fewer children—seems the most praiseworthy solution to foster care failures. And those who can recognize those failures may just be the most excellent candidates for the vocation!” *Pastor Michael Salemink, Lutherans For Life – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*

COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED—We still need someone willing to serve the three year term as a Trustee and also need someone to fill the Board of Ed head position for the remaining of this year.

SAVE the DATE for TRIVIA NIGHT at Immanuel Lutheran Church (To Benefit the Immanuel Youth), Saturday, May 14th beginning at 7 pm. (doors open @ 6 pm). This will be a night of fun with trivia and a silent auction. Tables are \$80 each (8 seats per table). More details to come! Questions can be directed to Helen Vogel @ 309-781-9627.

A poster for the National Day of Prayer. At the top, an angel with large white wings and a sword is depicted. Below the angel, four diverse people (a man, a woman, a man, and a woman) are shown in various prayerful poses. The background is a mix of blue and yellow light. The text is overlaid on the image.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022

EXALT THE LORD

WHO HAS
ESTABLISHED US

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7



PRAY FOR OUR NATION

- God give our leaders the wisdom to know good from evil and actively support the good and oppose the evil.
- Provide leaders with wise and godly counselors who will provide honest wisdom and encouragement.
- Lord, pour out a spirit of cooperation between elected leaders.
- Break down the barriers that are built up by selfish ambition for personal power.
- Safeguard the marriages and families of elected leaders who spend large portions of time away from home.
- God, give leaders clarity to know what issues are most important to dedicate their time toward.
- Soften the hearts of leaders to hear and understand the needs of the communities they serve.

MEDIA

- Teach us to not place too much focus on the news and entertainment, but on the Word of God.
- Teach us to use the news as prayer prompts and ideas for how to serve our local community.
- Pour out wisdom for people who bring funding to entertainment media to fund things that are wholesome and speak the truth of God.
- Send creativity for artists to create thought-provoking works of art and entertainment that point towards Your redemptive plan for humanity.
- Guide news professionals to seek truth and gather evidence, to present the issues of the day clearly and honestly.
- Strengthen the Christians in these spheres to boldly stand for Biblical truth in the writer's rooms, board meetings and creative processes.

MILITARY

- Lord, help all military personnel see You working in their daily lives, that You are with them, whether they are in the field, at home, or abroad.
- God, hold the families of service members close, and may they look to You for the strength and peace that only You can give.
- Comfort the spouses who are separated due to military jobs—keep these marriages strong.
- Help all members of our military to serve with courage, honor, and

integrity.

BUSINESS

- May each business leader be of great character: of integrity, humbleness of spirit and heart, honest in speech and actions, empathetic and vulnerable.
- Lord, raise up a workforce that is filled with a desire for excellence and diligence in the work they do.
- May the gifts of the work of their hands be a great blessing to each family and community.
- Father, open the hearts of business leaders to be soul-searching, to cast out any greed, selfish ambition and idols and lay them on the altar of repentance.
- Give shift leaders hearts genuinely concerned with the overall well being of their workers.
- Give all employees hearts that are not trapped in selfishness, but truly desire the best for their place of work.

EDUCATION

- God, guide school boards to be wise in choosing curriculum that uphold the truth of the Word.
- Give Christian parents a missionary mindset to minister to the teachers in their children's lives.
- Lord, draw near to teachers in the classroom and teach them to rely on the Holy Spirit throughout the day rather than their own strength.
- Bless teachers with an outpouring of grace and endurance of such magnitude it overflows onto their students, their schools, and their communities.
- Turn the hearts of students to see their worth and value in their Creator and Savior, rather than test scores, athletic performance or social media following.
- Bless students to work diligently at their studies that they would be well-prepared to discern the truth from falsehood, learn the importance of hard work and dedication, and so grow up to be contributing members of society.

CHURCH

- Give your pastors the keen wisdom and insight of Your Holy Spirit so that they would remain faithful servants, teaching and preaching the Word of God in all its truth and purity so that the mission of Your Church may continue until You return.
- Lord, open hearts in the church to care for people outside the church, to be praying for them and to become visibly and tangibly concerned and helping them in needs and struggles.
- God, use Your Church as a beacon of light and joy to a world that is searching for answers.
- Remind us to eagerly look for ways to use our time, talents, and treasures to build up the Body of Christ.
- Open the hearts of Your people to regularly and gladly hear the Word of God proclaimed by those You have called to be their shepherds.

FAMILY

- Grant us humility, and with that humility bring stability and peace to families.
- Strengthen husbands and fathers to be the spiritual leaders of their family as You call them to be.
- Give husbands and wives the grace to consider each other before self.
- Supply comfort for families moving forward through grief.
- Strengthen families who also serve as caretakers for medically fragile family members.
- Grant that Your people would see children as blessings instead of burdens.
- Work in families a greater desire to be in God's Word than in the things of the world and to live as Your people instead of as people of the world.
- Grant harmony in blended families.

Third Sunday of Easter

April 24, 2022

Text: Revelation 5:1-14ⁱ (Epistle)

Other Texts: Acts 9:1-22 (First Reading); John 21:1-14 (Gospel)

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father be yours through faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation is a series of visions. Today’s text is part of the second vision, which begins with the Apostle John being brought into the heavenly throne room.ⁱⁱ There he sees the four living creatures, apparently cherubim,ⁱⁱⁱ the twenty-four elders representing God’s people of both the Old and New Testaments (symbolic of the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles), the glassy sea representative of the gulf of separation between God and His fallen creation, even His people, for He is with them, but invisibly in omnipresence and the means of grace. Most astounding is John’s vision of God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He who sat [on the throne] had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald...From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God.^{iv}

As the bright sunlight cannot be looked upon, yet the beauty and glory of its rays can be seen when reflected by precious stones which give them their sparkle, so it is that “the Father of lights”^v cannot be looked directly upon, but John is permitted to see Him as if His radiance is reflected in a comparable way. Also the Holy Spirit whose coming upon the apostles was made visible by tongues of fire^{vi} is here perceived as burning torches, with the number seven referring to how the prophet Isaiah speaks of Him as the seven-fold Spirit,^{vii} as well as how God is present in His creation by His Spirit, as represented by the number 3 (God’s Triune nature) being added to the number 4 (the four cardinal directions of the compass).

Separated from God by the glassy sea, John’s witnesses the lightning and thunder from the throne reminding him, and all who read his account, of God’s theophany at Mt. Sinai, when the people were walled off from coming near the mountain lest they die.^{viii} The mountain where God came with thunder and lightning, revealing His power and majesty, His sovereign rule, His holiness, and His wrath upon those who are not holy. John also witnesses something else, a scroll with writing on both sides held in the hand of the Father. And he hears the call from a mighty angel, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”^{ix}

As John was already told twice that he would be shown what must take place,^x John understood that the breaking of the seals so the scroll could be opened was necessary for that revelation to happen. No wonder then that he openly wept when no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

Dear Christians, while not the main point, this text teaches that there is no one who can see the future, pierce its veil, except for He who created time, God Himself. To all others the future is a closed book. Any attempt to read it outside of what He reveals is illegitimate, sinful, and doomed to fail. Those who claim to know it, predict it, or control it stand condemned, as do those who seek them out, such as King Saul who went to the medium of En-dor.^{xi}

What little these frauds “predict” consists of “best guesses,” vague generalities, and likely a combination of both. Those who seem to know more are more dangerous still, as they have a demonic source. But since the demons were not worthy to open the scroll, *they cannot know the future either*. But God will use these lying spirits to trap the spiritually blind, those who claim special sight as well as those who would be led by these false seers. Lest any of us be tempted by such attempts to seek out that which God has hidden, it should be remembered that not only will all such attempts to know the future fail in any real sense, but far worse, God’s Word is clear that all practitioners of magic are excluded from the heavenly Jerusalem.^{xii}

Returning to the vision, as I said, no wonder John wept. The scroll had writing on both sides, indicating that the record is extensive and complete, that nothing more could be added because nothing more would happen beyond what is written concerning the future destinies of men, the world and the whole creation, and the Church. But note, the opening of the scroll was not merely to reveal what is to happen, but to actually execute it, to make what is written happen.^{xiii} Thus John’s weeping was more than just sorrow over not knowing, not receiving the full vision, but also that God’s plans seemed to be stopped! As the scroll could not be opened, its words of what was to come remained hidden and inactive. Perhaps John feared that the small, persecuted Church of which he was the last living apostle had no future. But such is not the case!

“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.^{xiv}

And so it is that He who promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church now enters the heavenly scene.^{xv} For John had seen the Father and the Holy Spirit, but where was the Son? He had united His divinity to humanity in the Virgin Mary’s womb, becoming the Godman, Jesus of Nazareth, to come as the Lamb of God in order that He could be slain, offered as a sin offering, the Lamb of atonement, for our sins.

But though He *had* been slain, He was not dead, but very alive! While still bearing the wounds of the nails and spear on His resurrected body, they no longer cause Him pain, but remain to give us, sinners, hope and certainty. For they prove that the same Jesus who died as our substitute is risen. They show that He did not shed His human nature by which He redeemed us, but that it is exalted to the highest glory, thereby assuring us that all who believe in Him and are baptized into Him will be saved, our bodies rising and being exalted in glory like His.^{xvi}

This vision indicates that it is exactly because He was slain, that He is our crucified and risen Savior, that He is worthy to open the scroll. Consequently, this is a vision of what we confessed in the creed, that Jesus “ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.”^{xvii} Here is Jesus’ entrance into the fullness of heavenly glory once briefly glimpsed at His transfiguration, His taking the scroll indicating that He the Lamb is also the prophesied Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the conquering Messianic ruler who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

For make no mistake, His willingly permitting Himself to be slaughtered as the Lamb of God, that which has been, still is, and will be mocked by unbelievers as the epitome of weakness, is in reality the greatest victory ever won. For seeming to be an easy target, the ancient serpent bit deep into Jesus’ heel on the cross, death swallowed Him whole, all true and terrible indeed. But the end result was Satan’s head being crushed and death gutted from the inside out! Jesus came in weakness before death and the devil *because of us*, because we are weak and helpless before them due to our sinful corruption. But this seemingly weak man was not a sinner and, more, He is the eternal Son of the Father, and so we are forgiven, redeemed, and saved by Him!

Jesus was the only one who could receive the scroll because He is the center of God’s plan of salvation. So He, the creating Word of the Father by which all things were made, is also the Redeemer of the fallen creation by dying for sinful mankind. And He, risen and ascended, is the ruler of creation and, specifically, His Church. So now, as the worthy Lamb and ruling Lion, Jesus opens the seals, bringing forth that which the seal enacted, but also revealing it to John and, through him, the Church as a whole, and we her children.^{xviii}

The Lord Jesus’ opening of the seals reveals the tribulation and suffering that the human race, including believers, will experience from His ascension into heaven until His visible return from heaven on the Last Day to judge the living and the dead. There is no sugar-coating. The opening of the first four seals reveal the four horsemen symbolizing conquest, war, famine, and death, the general lot of this world as God enacts His earthly judgment through people who are made insane with sin, leading to wars and rumors of wars and their dreadful consequences.

The opening of the fifth seal shows saints in heaven being told to rest, a joyful truth. But it also reveals that they are those who had been slain for their faithful witness to the Word of God, a grim picture for believers on earth. The opening of the sixth seal reveals the destruction of not only this world, but the whole cosmos, with the mass of mankind crying out to the mountains, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”^{xix} And so all naïve hopes and ideas of utopia are destroyed by the future revealed to us, the truth that this current world, this current universe, has no future except fiery destruction at God’s hand.

Yet there is more.^{xx} For the opening of the seals also reveals Christ’s present and future rule over all of creation, which He exercises for His people. It reveals the defeat of Satan and all his forces, demonic and human, their ultimate doom being the eternal lake of fire. Most of all, it reveals that while the Church will suffer here on earth, it will not die and its mission will continue until all whose names are in the Lamb’s book of life have been brought to faith.

And then it is revealed how God's people will be brought out of suffering and death into the glory of life everlasting in the world to come, the new heavens and earth where we shall see our Triune God, not via a vision received by another, not even a vision of our own, *but with our own resurrected eyes*. There we shall live as kings and priests in the New Jerusalem, freely eat of the Tree of Life, drink to our fill from the river of the water of life, which is the Holy Spirit and the fullness of life which He alone gives to both body and soul.

Christ Jesus was worthy to open the seals and so God has revealed the future to us as much as we ever will. He has revealed the hard part which we shall face while on this earth. Yet even now we find hope in that the future is subject to His knowledge and control. While we might be surprised by developments and so be tempted to fear them, He will never be ignorant of the enemies' plans nor will he ever be helpless before them. He holds the book of the future in his hands and only what He in his gracious providence permits will take place. And He has revealed the glory yet to come, filling us with hope so that we do not give up, but remain faithful unto death and so receive the crown of life. Thus we, even now, join in the new song of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" Amen!

ⁱ Verses 1-7 are an optional extended reading which were read in the service.

ⁱⁱ This vision begins in Revelation 4. Today's text is a continuation of this vision which continues through the opening of the seven seals.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Ezekiel 1:5; 10:1.

^{iv} Revelation 4:3, 5. All quotes are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

^v James 1:17.

^{vi} Acts 2:3.

^{vii} Isaiah 11:2.

^{viii} Exodus 19.

^{ix} Revelation 5:2.

^x Revelation 1:1; 4:1.

^{xi} 1 Samuel 28:3ff.

^{xii} Revelation 22:15.

^{xiii} This is indicated in chapter 6 by the fact that as it is when the seals are opened that the events they speak of begin.

^{xiv} Revelation 5:5-7.

^{xv} Matthew 16:18.

^{xvi} Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:1-3; Revelation 3:21.

^{xvii} The Nicene Creed.

^{xviii} For the Church as our mother see Galatians 4:26; Revelation 12:17.

^{xix} Revelation 6:16-17.

^{xx} The opening of the sixth seal is followed by the picture of the Church Triumphant in heaven (7:9ff.) and then the opening of the seventh seal which ushers in further visions which reveal both wrath and suffering, but also grace and salvation.