

# Worship in the Home: May 2, 2021

Posted on April 27, 2021 by ELCA Worship



## Worship in the Home

### Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B

May 2, 2021

*In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.*

*Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle and place a bowl of water in remembrance of your baptism. One person may lead this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.*

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

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

**Amen.**

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

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.**

### **First Reading: Acts 8:26-40**

*Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.*

<sup>26</sup>An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So Philip got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup>and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup>The eunuch replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" <sup>38</sup>He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Psalm 22:25-31**

<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the <sup>l</sup>great assembly;  
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who <sup>l</sup>fear the LORD.

<sup>26</sup>The poor shall eat <sup>l</sup>and be satisfied,

Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts <sup>l</sup>live forever!

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn <sup>l</sup>to the LORD;  
all the families of nations shall bow <sup>l</sup>before God.

<sup>28</sup>For dominion belongs <sup>l</sup>to the LORD,  
who rules over the nations,

<sup>29</sup>Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow <sup>l</sup>down in worship;  
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

<sup>30</sup>Their descendants shall <sup>l</sup>serve the LORD,  
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

<sup>31</sup>They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people <sup>l</sup>yet unborn,  
saying to them, "The <sup>l</sup>LORD has acted!"

### **Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-21**

*We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.*

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>God's love was

revealed among us in this way: God sent into the world God's only Son so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent the Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in God and God in us, because we have been given of God's own Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup>Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as the Son is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because God first loved us. <sup>20</sup>Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup>The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel: John 15:1-8**

The holy gospel according to John.

#### **Glory to you, O Lord.**

*On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup>My Father removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit my Father prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Reflection**

*Having read these readings, think on this:*

Jesus Christ is the true Vine, but we are too often withered branches, afraid and without the fruit of love. This day let the word of God do its cleansing, pruning work. In that word you—whether you are alone or gathered with an assembly of disciples—are connected to the crucified and risen Christ, and God's own Spirit flows to you. You are made alive and part of Christ for the life of the world. This day let Philip explain the scriptures also to you. Remember that, with the Ethiopian eunuch, you are baptized. Remember that you have drunk from Christ the vine at the eucharist in the past and you will do so again. Abide in Christ and let his word abide in you. Then, even now when the world is filled with fear, put fear away and turn in love toward your neighbors, especially toward those that others may consider outsiders.

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 377), "That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 384), "To Christ Belong, in Christ Behold" (All Creation Sings 958). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

[That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright](#)

[To Christ Belong, in Christ Behold](#)

*Then pray these intercessions:*

On this fifth Sunday of Easter, let us unite in Christ to pray for all in any need, responding to each petition with the words "Make us one in you."

*A brief silence.*

God of triune mystery, as you have formed your church to be one fruitful vine, strengthen our churches and our ecumenical connections with Christians across the street and around the globe.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O loving God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you blessed Philip the evangelist, nurture our missionaries and theologians, our seminaries, our Sunday schools, and all adult discussions of the faith.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O enlightening God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you brought the Ethiopian eunuch to baptism, lead all Christian communities to welcome people of each sexual identity, every skin color, and all national backgrounds.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O embracing God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you created an earth with countless forms of plant and animal life, train us to honor and maintain the bountiful earth that you intend for us and future generations.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O creating God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you have provided food and drink for humankind, give to all persons wisdom in their use of wine, and strengthen recovering alcoholics in maintaining their sobriety.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O empowering God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you call humankind to live in love with one another, bring peace to nations, to neighborhoods, and to homes. Protect the oppressed and the vulnerable in every land, show us the path to nonviolence in all things.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O reconciling God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you have promised to hear the cries of all the needy, listen now to the countless people around the world who are suffering from sickness, from the coronavirus, from injustice, from abuse, from starvation. Hear our pleas for India. We pray especially for. . . .

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O healing God:

**Make us one in you.**

As you have sustained each of us in your love, receive now the silent petitions of our hearts.

*A longer period of silence.*

Hear our prayer, O abiding God:

**Make us one in you.**

We remember those who have died in the faith, especially today Athanasius the theologian and those we name in our hearts. As you have promised to bring your people into your strong and tender embrace, preserve us until we enter with all the saints into your everlasting mercy.

*A brief silence.*

Hear our prayer, O eternal God:

**Make us one in you.**

Into your hands, O living God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

*If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "Now the Green Blade Rises" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 379), "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 619), "God Is Love" (All Creation Sings 1041). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.*

[I Know That My Redeemer Lives](#)

[God Is Love](#)

*Then conclude with these prayers:*

Let us pray.

*A brief silence is kept before the prayer.*

Praise to you, O God, for your Word of life:

creating a wondrous universe,  
proclaiming freedom from captivity,  
becoming the song of your people.

We praise you, O God, for your Word.

**We praise you, O God, for your Word.**

Your Word is made flesh among us:

with Mary in the garden, you call us by name.

With Thomas beholding your wounds, you call us to believe.

With sheep of other folds, we are gathered by your voice.

Your Word names our death and our life:

a seed that falls into the earth and dies,  
rain and snow that come down from heaven to water the earth,  
a vine in which we abide.

Through your Word, you appoint us to bear fruit, fruit that will last.

We bless you, O God, for your Word.

**We bless you, O God, for your Word.**

By your living Word, we are witnesses of these things.

Breathe into us your Holy Spirit.

Open our minds to understand the scriptures.

Give us wisdom to declare what we have heard,

what we have seen with our eyes,

what we have looked at and touched with our hands  
concerning the word of life.

Fill us with strength to love, not in word or speech alone,  
but in truth and action.

With every creature in heaven and on earth  
and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them,  
we join in the hymn of all creation, as  
we thank you, O God, for your life-giving Word.

**We thank you, O God, for your life-giving Word.**

**Amen.**

### **Offering Prayer**

God of love, you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you. (Our mailbox has a lock on it, so is secure.)

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

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

*Then speak the Blessing:*

May our glorious God grant us a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

**Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

**Devotional Music Links:** For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Once Led to Your Font](#);" "[A New Commandment](#);" "[Growth in Righteousness](#)."

**Readings for the Week:**

**Monday** Psalm 80. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Monica, mother of Augustine, 387) James 3:17-18. **Wednesday** John 14:18-31. **Thursday** Psalm 98. **Friday** Acts 10:34-

43. **Saturday** (commemoration of Julian Norwich, renewer of the church, c. 1416) Deuteronomy 32:44-47. **Sixth Sunday of Easter** (commemoration of Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, renewer of the church, hymnwriter, 1760) Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17.

**Daily Prayer Resources** are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. To purchase copies of [Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#) and [All Creation Sings](#) for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from [All Creation Sings](#) will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw.

Portions from [Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#), [All Creation Sings](#), and [sundaysandseasons.com](#) © 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Readings from [Readings for the Assembly](#) © 1995, 1996, 1997 Augsburg Fortress. Citations from the Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Scripture quotations from NRSV Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, adapted and edited with permission by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw.

***Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.***

***Thank you to those who provide you with these worship services.***

**Grubby Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, No potluck – hopefully next year.**

"**Our church is looking for an Administrative Assistant** to replace Diane Eddy who is retiring on June 1. This position will support our future pastor, the Council and Congregation, by managing the Church office. This is a paid position working 15-18 hours a week. A full position description is posted on the fellowship hall bulletin board. If interested please contact Diane (426-3343) or any Council member. (Elizabeth Eddy, Walt Ford, Len Flesher, Joe Frauenshuh, Carole Holten, Lynette Maas, Dick Rohde, Ron Smith, Bev Streeter)"

**Thank you to Worship & Music** who have put time and effort to bring you Worship Services. If anyone would like to read for us, please let one of us know. (Worship & Music Team: Sue Berg, Bernis Geving, Pat Jonson, Alice Graff, Aileen DeMenge, Dick Rohde & Diane Eddy)

***Grace Women with Grace will be sponsoring the Community Meal May 19<sup>th</sup>. If you would***

***like to help please talk to Mary Ann Kult or Diane E.***

***Please keep in your prayers this week:*** Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Carole Holten, Donna Jackson-Hein, Lois Goossen (Friend of Newgard's), Danny Vorbeck.

### **Bishop Odgren's Sermon**

Synod Assembly Worship – May 2, 2021 GOSPEL READING: John 15:9-17 One: The holy gospel according to John, the fifteenth chapter. All: Glory to you, O Lord.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. One:

The gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Dear siblings in Christ, grace, peace and mercy are yours through our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen We are just coming off of our synod-wide gathering...our second digital synod assembly in two years. We have gathered around the theme of "Love Ignites Us". This worship service is an extension of our synod assembly and I am glad that you can all be with us. You are connected to the 131 congregations that are a part of the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. Together, we are stronger than any of us are on our own – and we need each other as we continue to spread the love of God in Christ Jesus to a world that is hungry for a word of hope, forgiveness and love.

When we hear the word Love, I suspect that many of us have several different images swirling in our imaginations. How many of you have or have had a song that you or your spouse or partner have called "your" song? Maybe it's one that was playing when you first met. Maybe it's a song that was popular when you were dating. Maybe it's the song you danced to at your wedding or just a song that tells a familiar story or speaks a familiar word about your relationship.

Love songs are good. It means something to have 'a song' you can call your own. It means something to have 'your song' – one that captures a moment in time or that helps to define a relationship or that simply triggers a meaningful memory. And that can be hard, too, of course, when a relationship ends, or memories fade.

And anyone who's ever been in a relationship of any kind for any length of time knows that a song – no matter how good – only goes so far. It's easy to be in love when the stars are shining or when the weather's nice or when the dishes are done; when the lawn's been mowed and the bills are paid.

And, while I think Jesus can appreciate this kind of romantic, sentimental love, it's important to know that this not what he has in mind when he speaks to the disciples in this morning's Gospel about abiding in the love of God.

Because, for starters, "abide" is a great word, isn't it? ... to remain in, to hold fast to, to endure... the notion of what it means to abide carries with it a lot of weight, don't you think? And so does the word Jesus uses for "love" this morning.

It's worth acknowledging or remembering that we can get pretty lazy with our words ... we say we love chocolate, or we love the races, or we love that outfit or that restaurant or that song, or whatever. And then we say that we love God, too, and that God calls us to love one another and to love our neighbor and to love our enemy, just the same...as if those kinds of love are all the same sort of thing.

So it matters that Jesus uses that word "agape" for the love he's talking about today... to describe a love, that isn't a romantic, sentimental, groovy-kind-of-love, if you will. Jesus isn't talking about the "love" of most love songs, here. Agape-love is the sort of love God has for us and for the world, whether we know it or believe it or even like it or not.

Jesus says, "I chose you" ... "you did not choose me, but I chose you." That agape kind of love is holy, it's sacred, it's unconditional. That agape kind of love is an all-encompassing, cosmic kind of love. And it's this kind of love in which we are invited to abide.

Abide in MY kind of love Jesus says... God's kind of love. And to do that, he says, takes some work, some discipline, some commandment-following, some patience. ...

Not only that... this kind of abiding, this kind of deep, divine, cosmic-sort-of-loving – the kind of love Jesus lived and died embodying was the GREATEST kind of love and it isn't easy. I don't think it was easy for Jesus every step of the way, and I know it's not easy for us, either.

It wasn't easy for Jesus because it was this kind of love that drove him to the cross. It was agape love that called him out of his humanity and it was agape that allowed him to be crucified, killed and raised for the sake of all creation. That's the kind of love God has for the world.

Agape-love doesn't have strings attached. Agape-love doesn't have pre-requisites. Agape-love doesn't have a check-list. It is without limits. It doesn't ask questions – it just is. It just – and utterly – loves. It's a hard thing to describe and it's a hard thing to define. It's one of those things that is so big, so deep, so wide you can't quite explain it – you just know it when you feel it or when you see it in action.

So, I wonder if we can think about a time in our lives when we've felt the most loved. Maybe it sounded sweet like a love song. Maybe it rhymed like a poem. And that's great. But maybe it didn't. Maybe it wasn't pretty, like forgiveness for something that didn't deserve to be overlooked; or a dream sacrificed so that another dream could come true. Maybe it was tired and worn out – like a night spent in worry or prayer on your behalf.

Maybe it was unsettling to know how far someone else was willing to go or how much someone else was willing to give for your happiness or comfort or peace of mind, when you didn't deserve it. That's the abiding kind of agape-love that drove Jesus to the cross. Think about a time in your life when you had the most love to give. Did it sing like a song or feel like a dream? Did it hurt a little bit? Did it mean giving something up for somebody else? Did it mean sacrificing your own time, your own money, your own patience, or some part of your very self for the sake of another? That's the abiding kind of agape-love Jesus is talking about this morning, too.

It's not always pretty. It doesn't always end with a kiss or a dance or a warm embrace. And what's more, we aren't supposed to be picky about who receives it. This agape-kind-of-love comes for the sake of the world. It is for the outcast and the outsider – for those who don't look like us and for those for whom we may not even know – for those we may label as "undeserving" and for those we may judge and despise... that makes this love unsettling and scary and dangerous, too. But the love of God in Christ Jesus urges us on...we're given the courage to love because Christ dwells within us. We become conduits...vessels of this love. Love ignites us! We can't help but share it – spread it - and give it away because the AGAPE of God is poured out for the world with grace and mercy and peace for ALL people – no exceptions.

It wouldn't mean as much if it were easy to give. We wouldn't know this love's worth or value if we never shared it with another. It's not something we can claim as ours alone. It's more than just a moment or a memory or a cheesy sentimentality.

Here is where you have been chosen, dear synod partners - called and appointed by virtue of your baptism in Jesus' name to point to and witness to Christ, and to proclaim the good news that God loves us – and that God will not shy away even from the worst of humanity's instincts – and the resurrection that follows is the promise and sign that when we've done our very worst, been our very worst, fallen so tragically short of God's hopes for us...yet even then God's love embodied and made flesh in Jesus endures, remains, and is victorious.

"You did not choose me," Jesus reminds us, "but I chose you and I have forgiven you so that you are free to go forth and bear the good fruit that I have called and appointed you to bear—fruit that will not just be a band-aid solution to the woes of this world, as good as they may be, but fruit that also will have a long-lasting effect in bringing about the beloved community of justice, peace,

and freedom for which I so ardently advocated until I took my last breath and gave my life over to the God whose Spirit guided me throughout my entire life in the way of truth.”

Oh, Love Ignites Us, people of God! The AGAPE of God – the kind of love Jesus chooses for us – and chooses us for – is something we can only abide and dare to offer when we acknowledge that it’s already been poured out for our sake too.

I leave you with the scripture we have heard today and the Word which we have gathered around this weekend in our Synod Assembly. Hear these words as a commissioning – as a charge to action in Christ’s name as you are sent out into the weary world: From Second Timothy, chapter

**1: for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love.**

And from Second Corinthians, chapter 5: **The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for Christ who died and was raised for them...for us... for all the world.**

**Love Ignites Us!** Go and walk in this way of truth – the way of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience grounded in God’s eternal love. Amen.

## **Pastor’s Mid-week Message for April 28, 2021**

She was due to be born Jan. 6. I wanted to name her Noelle. Her Mom liked Aurora. Mom suggested we let baby decide. If birth before Jan. 6, the Day of Epiphany, then my choice. If after, hers.

Following 24 hours of moderate labor, and 12 hours of hard labor, Aurora was born Jan. 7, 1981. We gave her Catherine as a middle name to honor the Christian saint who endured torture and yet remained faithful to the Lord, even unto death. I still carry a 1981 penny in my pocket as a reminder of what a wonderful year it was. The late Sal Berg of Bethel saved a bunch of them from ‘81 for me.

Fifteen years came and went. For a number of reasons, life became unbearable for Aurora. It hurt more for her to live than die. She died 25 years ago this week, on the 29th.

For a number of years, I attended Compassionate Friends meetings for parents of dead children. We met at St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids until the group disbanded. It was like A.A., only for a different purpose and reason.

The St. Paul paper had a daily feature called “Bulletin Board.” One of the regular contributors was Peachy of Cottage Grove, MN. Her young daughter Nina was hit and killed by a car while her family was on vacation in Florida. I could identify with virtually every word Peachy wrote. It seems grief has a universal language.

One word not in that language for me is “closure.” That word implies quick healing and happiness. Not so in real life. Hurts heal over but leave scars – deep scars. Life takes on a different attitude than before.

According to 2 Samuel 19, when king David of Israel was told his son Absalom had been killed, David cried out, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!” Many others and I can understand his mourning. But we can’t stop there...

“What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.” We sang that hymn at Bethel last Sunday. “What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.” We need that message whatever burdens we bear.

Pastor Bill Sass