



 *Palentine*
Lutheran Church

Ascension Sunday

May 16, 2021

Reaching Out in Christian Love to All

1375 Highway 210

Huxley, IA 50124

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Ascension Sunday
May 16, 2021

In today's readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples are told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

*Stand as you are able **Bold Print** = congregation responds
ELW=Red Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Ringling of the Bell and Prelude

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

***THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God,
the fountain of living water,
the rock who gave us birth,
our light and our salvation.

Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

We give you thanks, O God,
for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters
and by your Word you created the world,
calling forth life in which you took delight.
Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.

Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.

At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons, making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.

Shower us with your Spirit,

and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise

through Jesus Christ our Lord

in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

“You Servants of God”

ELW 825

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.; Music: attr. Johann Michael Haydn, 1737-1806; public domain.

You Servants of God

1 You ser - vants of God, your Mas - ter pro - claim, and pub - lish a -
2 As - cend - ed on high, al - might - y to save, yet still he is
3 Sal - va - tion to God who sits on the throne! Let all cry a -
4 Then let us a - dore and give him his right, all glo - ry and

broad his won - der - ful name; the name, all vic - to - rious, of
high, his pres - ence we have. The great con - gre - ga - tion his
loud and hon - or the Son. The prais - es of Je - sus the
pow'r and wis - dom and might, all hon - or and bless - ing, with

Je - sus ex - tol; his king - dom is glo - rious and rules o - ver all!
tri - umph shall sing, as - crib - ing sal - va - tion to Je - sus, our king!
an - gels pro - claim, fall down on their fac - es, and wor - ship the Lamb.
an - gels a - bove, and thanks nev - er ceas - ing, and in - fin - ite love!

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.
Music: LYONS, attr. Johann Michael Haydn, 1737-1806

*GREETING

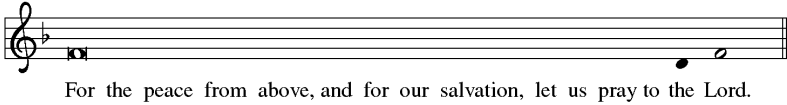
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

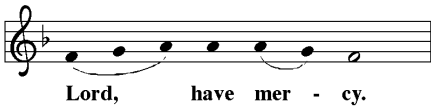
*KYRIE



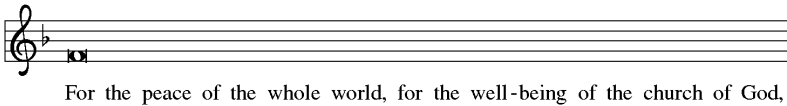
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



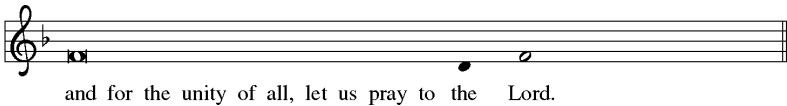
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



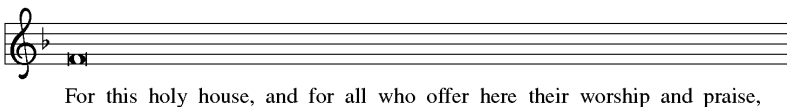
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



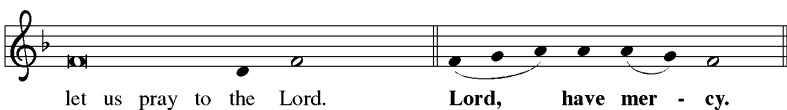
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



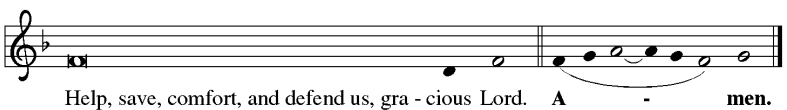
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

*CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Pg. 139 setting 3

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 1 Wor-thy is Christ, the Lamb
who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo-ple of God.

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 2 Pow-er, rich-es, wis-dom, and
strength, and hon-or, bless-ing, and glo-ry are his.

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 3 Sing with all the peo-ple of
God, and join in the hymn of all cre-a-tion: Bless-ing, hon-or,
glo-ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A-men.

Refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia,
al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia. 4 For the Lamb who was
slain has be-gun his reign. Al-le-lu-ia.

Final refrain
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

**Almighty God, your only Son was taken into the heavens and in your presence intercedes for us. Receive us and our prayers for all the world, and in the end bring everything into your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.**

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

FIRST READING: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

In the days between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost, Peter oversees the process whereby one of the members of the community of believers is chosen to be the twelfth apostle, in order to fill the vacancy created by Judas's treachery and death.

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶"Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—¹⁷for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." ²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." ²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 1

¹Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,

nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

²Their delight is in the law of the LORD,

and they meditate on God's teaching day and night.

³They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither;

everything they do shall prosper.

⁴It is not so with the wicked;

they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

⁵Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,

nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked shall be destroyed

SECOND READING: 1 John 5:9-13

God has borne witness to the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in the Son of God believes in the witness of God and has the promise of eternal life.

⁹If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has

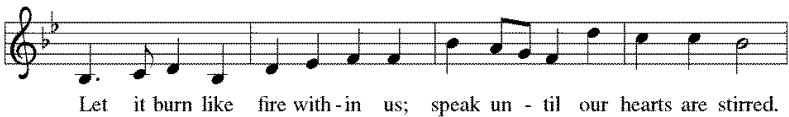
life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**



***GOSPEL: Luke 24:44-53**

The Holy Gospel according to Luke the 24th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the day of his ascension, Jesus leaves his disciples with a commission, a blessing, and a promise of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the

city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – *Please stay in your seats/pews*

REFLECTION SONG "Beautiful Savior" ELW 838 (vs. 1, 4)

Text: *Gesangbuch*, Münster, 1677; tr. Joseph A. Seiss, 1823-1904; Music: Silesian folk tune, 19th cent.; public domain.

Beautiful Savior

1 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, King of cre - a - tion,
 2 Fair are the mead - ows, fair are the wood - lands,
 3 Fair is the sun - shine, fair is the moon - light,
 4 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, Lord of the na - tions,

Son of God and Son of Man!
 robed in flow'rs of bloom - ing spring;
 bright the spar - kling stars on high;
 Son of God and Son of Man!

Tru - ly I'd love thee, tru - ly I'd serve thee,
 Je - sus is fair - er, Je - sus is pur - er,
 Je - sus shines bright - er, Je - sus shines pur - er
 Glo - ry and hon - or, praise, ad - o - ra - tion,

light of my soul, my joy, my crown,
 he makes our sor - rowing spir - it sing,
 than all the an - gels in the sky,
 now and for - ev - er - more be thine!

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY “A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!” ELW 393

Text: Bede, 673–735; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*; Music: *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1623; Reprinted under OneLicense.net 1-708142 All rights reserved.

A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!



1 A hymn of glo - ry let us sing! New hymns through-out the world shall
2 The ho - ly ap - os - tol - ic band up - on the Mount of Ol - ives
3 To whom the shin - ing an - gels cry, “Why stand and gaze up - on the
4 “You see him now, as - cend - ing high up to the por - tals of the
5 O ris - en Christ, as - cend - ed Lord, all praise to you let earth ac -



ring: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, by a road be - fore un -
stand, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! and with his faith - ful fol - l’wers
sky?” Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! “This is the Sav - ior!” thus they
sky.” Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! “Here - af - ter Je - sus you shall
cord: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! You are, while end - less ag - es



trod, as - cends un - to the throne of God.
see their Lord as - cend in maj - es - ty,
say, “this is his glo - rious tri - umph day!” Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le -
see re - turn - ing in great maj - es - ty.”
run, with Fa - ther and with Spir - it one.



lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Bede, 673–735; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: LASST UNS ERFREUEN, *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1623
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BLESSING FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRADUATES

We are delighted to recognize high school graduates of Palestine Lutheran Church today. It is our privilege to affirm these members of our congregation who have completed one phase of their lives and move with great expectations to another.

Graduates, please stand as your names are read:

- Ben Ewing
- Caleb Hartsook
- Isaac Larson
- Zach Larson
- Nolan Schonhorst
- Marshall Sheldahl
- Kaylee Van Pelt
- *Special mention:* Inga Dovre

Graduates, as you celebrate your achievements and prepare to begin new endeavors, be mindful of your grounding in faith, and of your vocation to serve God in all your life's work and accomplishments.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you bless your servants with many achievements. We give thanks especially for the milestones that *Ben, Caleb, Isaac, Zach, Nolan, Marshall, Kaylee* and *Inga* have attained. As they begin new phases of their lives, may they also know your love and experience your peace in all the experiences they encounter. Bless also the parents of these students, who have raised their children and nourished them in the Christian faith. Give them strength in your continuing presence and give them many joyful reunions with their sons and daughters, who may be leaving home soon to begin new and varied ventures, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Presentation of Gifts to Graduates.

APOSTLES' CREED

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Responses: Hear us, O God,
Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

***PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL *God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

OFFERING

Hymn of the Month: “Lord Be Glorified” ELW 744 (vs. 2, 3)

Text: Bob Kilpatrick, b. 1952; Music: Bob Kilpatrick; Reprinted under OneLicense.net 1-708142 All rights reserved.

Lord, Be Glorified

1 In my life, Lord, be glo-ri-fied, be glo-ri-fied;
2 In our song, Lord, be glo-ri-fied, be glo-ri-fied;
3 In your church, Lord, be glo-ri-fied, be glo-ri-fied;
4 In your world, Lord, be glo-ri-fied, be glo-ri-fied;

in my life, Lord, be glo-ri-fied to-day.
in our song, Lord, be glo-ri-fied to-day.
in your church, Lord, be glo-ri-fied to-day.
in your world, Lord, be glo-ri-fied to-day.

Text: Bob Kilpatrick, b. 1952
Music: BE GLORIFIED, Bob Kilpatrick
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***OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray.

Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

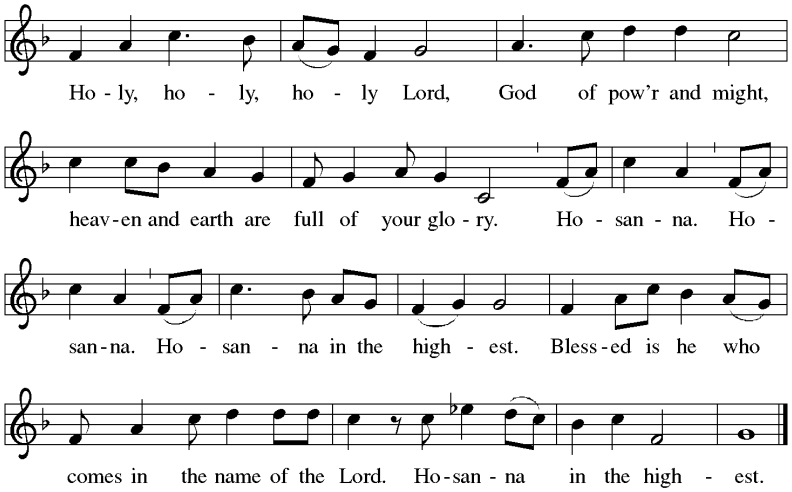
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of
everlasting life.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
 and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

***LORD'S PRAYER**

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

Holy Communion Distribution for Today

1. *Congregation will remain seated and commune from their seats using the prepackaged wafers and cups.*
2. *Ushers, Musicians and Technology ministers will commune with the congregation from their seats together with the Pastor.*
3. *Pastor will do a children's blessing while children remain in the pews with the help of parents.*
4. *Please dispose of empty communion cups in trash after service.*

COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray.

**Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you send light to conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.
Amen.**

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

***BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

***SENDING SONG**

"Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing"

ELW 389 (vs 1, 4)

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936; Music: T. Williams, Psalmodia Evangelica, 1789; Reprinted under OneLicense.net 1-708142 All rights reserved.

Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing

1 Christ is a - live! Let Chris - tians sing. The cross stands
 2 Christ is a - live! No long - er bound to dis - tant
 3 In ev - 'ry in - sult, rift, and war, where col - or,
 4 Wom - en and men, in age and youth, can feel the
 5 Christ is a - live, and comes to bring good news to

emp - ty to the sky. Let streets and homes with
 years in Pal - es - tine, but sav - ing, heal - ing,
 scorn, or wealth di - vide, Christ suf - fers still, yet
 Spir - it, hear the call, and find the way, the
 this and ev - 'ry age, till earth and sky and

prais - es ring. Love, drowned in death, shall nev - er die.
 here and now, and touch - ing ev - 'ry place and time.
 loves the more, and lives, where e - ven hope has died.
 life, the truth, re - vealed in Je - sus, freed for all.
 o - cean ring with joy, with jus - tice, love, and praise.

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936

Music: TRURO, T. Williams, *Psalmodia Evangelica*, 1789

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

Ringing of the Bell

Postlude

For streaming and printing:

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Those Serving in Today's Service

Pastor: Eric Klimpel

Accompanist: Mindy DeVries

Youth Liaison: Nels Dovre

Technicians: Brent Emerson, Austin Klimpel

This Week at Palestine

Today, Sunday, May 16, 2021 *Ascension Sunday*

8:00 a.m. ZOOM Dawn Dialog

9:30 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion; Recognition of Graduates

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

5:30-8 p.m. Clean up @ the church

6:30 p.m. ZOOM Bible study

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

7:00 a.m. Men's Bible Study

12:00 noon ZOOM Prayer time

12:30 p.m. Prayer Support Group (*error of date on last week's bulletin*)

1:00 p.m. Quilters

Friday, May 21-22 Synod Assembly

Saturday, May 22nd

9 a.m. - ? Clean Up @ the church

Sunday, May 23, 2021 *Day of Pentecost*

8:00 a.m. ZOOM Dawn Dialog

9:30 a.m. Worship

Lectionary texts: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Thank you for your Gifts for Ministry

Sunday, May 9, 2021

Attendance: 90 (+ 14 online households)

Current: \$6,241.50

Benevolence: \$133.50

Fellowship: \$15.00

Improvement: \$50.00

THANK YOU!!! We celebrate your generosity and thank you in advance for your support as we strive to reach our average weekly offering goal of \$4,825 for current expenses and \$68 for benevolence.

Southeastern Iowa Synod E-News Prayer: Give thanks and praise to God that, through the Spirit, we find words to proclaim the good news of Jesus, that all who listen may believe and experience new life, joy and freedom in Christ.



Tithes & Offering

Palestine will accept your offering!

1. **Bring** to worship service with you and place in offering plates.
2. **Mail** check to:
Palestine Lutheran Church
1375 HWY 210
Huxley, IA 50124
3. **Give online through Easy Tithe.**

Go to our website www.plchuxley.com and click on the bright red ONLINE GIVING tab on the right located above our "Reaching out in Christian love to all" statement.

Thank you. Continue to pray and know God is with us.

Class of
2021

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!



Ben Ewing

Attending DMACC

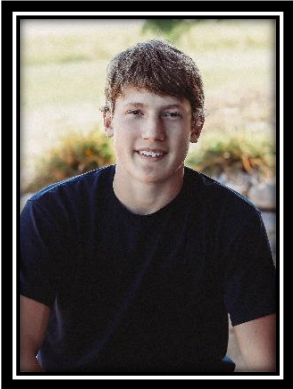


Caleb Hartsook

Attending Iowa State University to
major in Animal Science

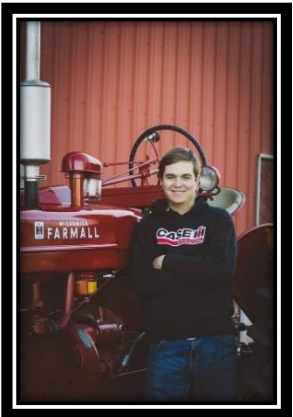
Class of 2021

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!



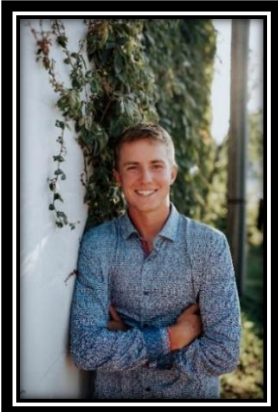
Isaac Larson

Isaac leaves July 20th for basic training in South Carolina. After basic, he will head to Virginia for training to be a Cargo Specialist.



Zach Larson

Zach will be attending Northeast Iowa Community College in Calmar, IA. He will be going through the John Deere Tech Program and will be sponsored by Van Wall, Nevada location.



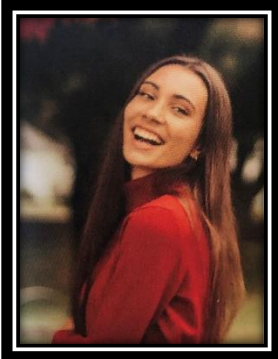
Nolan Schonhorst

Nolan is going to the University of Iowa and majoring in Biomedical Engineering.



Kaylee Van Pelt

Kaylee plans to attend the University of Northern Iowa to major in business with a minor in finance. She plans to try out for the UNI dance team.



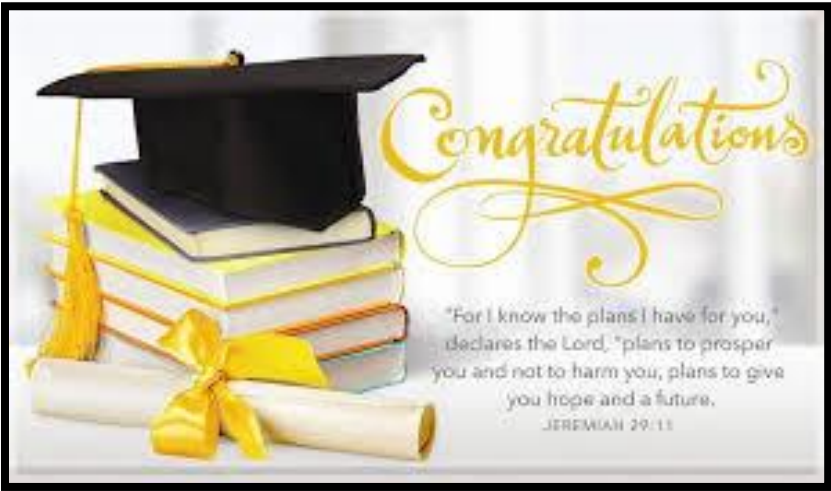
Inga Dovre

Inga plans to attend Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine.

Marshall Sheldahl

Graduating from Nevada High School

To our Graduates: As fellow members of this community of faith we rejoice with you and want you to know of our pride and excitement as you move from this accomplishment into the next phase of your life. We also want you to know that wherever you go and whatever you do, you are going forward with our prayers for God's continued guidance, power, protection, and strength.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Join us on a journey to Mars and Beyond as we explore where God's power can take us!

Our mission will take place **June 13th-17th** from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Palestine Lutheran Church.

➡ Here is the link for registration for 4-year old preschool - 5th grade (completed grades). <http://bit.ly/VBSfor2021>

➡ If you wish to sign up the old-fashioned way via a paper form, they are in fellowship hall.



A DONATION INVITATION to our caring congregation!

We, Palestine Piecemakers, are purchasing shelving to store our batting, boxes, and bulky items in the church basement. If you make a \$40 donation, then you may choose a quilted creation on:

- Sunday, May 23rd or
- Wednesday, May 26th from 12-4 p.m.

Otherwise, just call Louise Larson to view our cotton sensations. We are sew grateful!

*Louise Larson
Cynthia Johnson
& the Blanket Bunch*



CEMETERY NEWS!

There is water on the north end by the drive in the cemetery for your flower/plant needs!

Welcome to Worship! We're glad you're here (physically or virtually), guests and members alike, and pray that you will find in our worship an opportunity to praise God and hear God's Word.

All baptized Christians who believe that Christ Jesus is truly present in the sacrament to forgive, strengthen and bless us, are welcome to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Our Turn (Based on Luke 24)

That Jesus ascended into heaven after his resurrection is a fundamental Christian belief—so much so that we include it in our creeds. The response of his disciples to this extraordinary action was not one of shock, nor of dismay that he had again been taken from them. Instead, the disciples returned “to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God” (Luke 24:52-53).

The gospels tell us that for three years Jesus' disciples misunderstood his parables, misinterpreted his actions, and just plain missed the point of his public ministry. In a transformative moment just before his ascension, however, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). It might have been the most significant “light-bulb moment” in history. Over and over, Jesus had tried to convey his purpose to his disciples; now all became clear to them. Exhilarating as this enlightenment must have been, it also came with profound responsibilities. Since Jesus' time on earth was over, it was now the disciples' time. With Jesus no longer physically present to preach and to teach, to perform miracles, to heal, and to show compassion, all these responsibilities fell to those who followed him.

And yet this overwhelming task now seemed manageable to these once-bumbling disciples because Jesus provided them with the understanding they needed. That understanding is available to each of us as well. Baptized into the body of Christ, we have all that we need to proclaim Jesus' message. No wonder the disciples were joyous as they returned to Jerusalem. We can be, too. As spiritual descendants of those first students, we have the extraordinary privilege of showing and telling the world about the invitation of the Son of God. Whenever we look on another person with love and compassion, seeing Christ in them, we are proclaiming the great good news of perfect and unconditional love. What a gift we have been given, that Jesus has entrusted us with his message to share.