

## Sunday Devotion for Martin Luther Church

7th Sunday of Easter, May 24, 2020



**A warm welcome to watch this devotion and related videos at**  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIjEQnirqCMPH\\_Kro2XzjuY69pHcGVwvS](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIjEQnirqCMPH_Kro2XzjuY69pHcGVwvS)

### A. GATHERING

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

#### Words of Welcome

Hello and welcome. My name is Iris Schweiger. I am a lay preacher at the Martin Luther Church.

Grace and peace to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Today's service is all about Prayer. The prayer of people in the isolation of an upstairs room and Jesus open prayer to his father.



And with a prayer we will begin today's service.

#### Prayer of the Day

Gracious Father, we are the people of prayer. Your son has taught us to pray knowing that all comes from you. We are the people who have to pray, because in prayer we find strength and answers. Amen

**Amen.**

### B. WORD

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

#### Epistle Reading: Acts 1:6-14, read by Leanne and Stefan

<sup>6</sup>When [the apostles] had come together, they asked [Jesus], "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. <sup>11</sup>They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into

heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

### **Psalm 68:4-10, 32-35**

4Sing to God, sing praises to God’s name; exalt the one who rides the clouds;

I Am is that name, rejoice before God!

5In your holy habitation, O God,

you are a father to orphans, defender of widows;

6you give the solitary a home and bring forth prisoners into freedom;

but the rebels shall live in desert places.

7O God, when you went forth before your people,

when you marched through the wilderness,

8the earth quaked, and the skies poured down rain, at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,

at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9You sent a bountiful rain, O God;

you restored your inheritance when it languished.

10Your people found their home in it;

in your goodness, O God, you have made provision for the poor.

32Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;

sing praises to the Lord.

33You ride in the heavens, O God, in the ancient heavens;

you send forth your voice, your mighty voice.

34Ascribe power to God,

whose majesty is over Israel; whose strength is in the skies.

35How wonderful you are in your holy places, O God of Israel,

giving strength and power to your people! Blessed be God!

### **Gospel Reading: John 17:1-11, read by Alexander**

<sup>1</sup>After Jesus had spoken these words [to his disciples], he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup>I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup>Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup>for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup>I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup>All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>And now I am no longer in the world, but

they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

### **Sermon by Iris Schweiger, Lay Preacher**

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

In 2019 we had received the encouragement from our National Church, the ELCIC, to teach and implement prayer as the one big goal for all churches. Our National Bishop Susan Johnson reminded us: "Praying is something we are called to do. I think we need to talk more about prayer so we can encourage and challenge each other to a richer and deeper prayer discipline."

Reading the two bible texts for this Sunday, I was only too happy to find prayer in the heart of it all. And the best part was finding out that Jesus had already prayed, taught how to pray 2000 years ago because he knew that all of his disciples needed the power of prayer to experience closeness to God, regardless of the time and place, we would live in.

The reading shows that first Jesus prays with a focus on himself - Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you - then it switches to a prayer with focus on the disciples - and if you take the time after this service to read a bit further in John you will find out that Jesus ends his prayer for all believers at all times.

In the reading in Acts, we discover that Jesus, during his time on earth, equipped his followers with the power of prayer. In Acts we hear that Jesus was "taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. And as they were still looking up, two people dressed in white suddenly stood beside them giving them the message of hope - just as Jesus has been taken to heaven, he will also return from there. And what do the disciples do in answer to this rather strange series of events? They go into prayer. They pray constantly.

What? I see the red flag coming up in your mind. Constantly? How am I supposed to do that? Over the last year, as we at MLC incorporated more prayers into our lives, I noticed that praying constantly became a habit. Not a chore to be done. Often it is just a quick thought of gratefulness, a question formed quietly in my head all throughout the day. By now I dare to pray out loud and in front of people sometimes without a script, just free flowing whatever comes to mind. That took a lot of practice.

Which brings me to today, the strange times we live in right now and a question.

When realisation hit, that COVID 19 would thoroughly interrupt our lives, that it would wreak havoc all over the world in a way none of us could imagine, what did you do?

I prayed, for people.

First for all who were sick and dying, then for the ones that had already died and their families, the nurses, doctors, for politicians and you.

Then the prayer turned into one big question. God, how do you run a church without the

church building, without the pastor, without the many things we hold dear and we are used to? And then into many more.

God, how do we say farewell to Pastor Ceconi? God, Easter is coming. How will we be able to celebrate Easter? God, how do you lead a church in Corona times? God, how will we know that people are OK, if congregation members you have entrusted in our care, are really care for?

And as you know, slowly but surely, church happened. Church happens. Quite differently to what we are used to, but church happens nevertheless, every hour and every day in ways we never could have or **wanted** to imagine.

We now have our German-speaking Vicar record the German Radio devotion. We have Vicars and lay preachers recording Sunday services to ensure our congregation is nourished spiritually. The Corona Care callers started contacting congregation members and friends of Martin Luther immediately, then expanding the outreach to sending cards and stories to people who are not able to work on-line to participate in our Zoom coffee talks and prayer meetings, the online Sunday school and confirmation classes. Even our dinner church happened on-line for the first time. Who would have thought a joint dinner could happen in separate houses?

All of this has been stomped out of the ground in a few days and weeks, a tiny seed – planted in the ground – growing on fertile soil of prayer. Our faith and our church life are vibrant and visible, independent from strict government regulation that keep us safe indoors, away from our church building, yet able to serve. We mourn what is lost and at the same time adapt to new ways at zoom speeds.

I am fully aware that none of the new ways of church are perfect. We, the people of God have a longing for congregation, getting together in person, for worship, Holy Communion and prayer. I also know, regardless of how long it takes and how many changes we have to live with, we learn and embrace new ways of worship to ensure God is visible in the world. And he will become even more visible as we start a seed and garden project as planting season begins. We had prayed and reached out to different partners to get involved in food ministry, yet nothing worked out. We waited and prayed, and prayed and waited. Then Redeemer church announced a sharing of seeds project to give “peas a chance”.

I am so grateful that I learned how to use the versatile tool of prayer. It is a great relief to have the sounding board God when once again I am asking: God, and now? What is next? What do you want me to do now? And just a little later in the day. And now?

The peace of God, which is higher than all reason, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.  
AMEN

For more prayer information and ideas read: “Pray as you Go” by National Bishop Susan Johnson [https://www.elcic.ca/clweb/bishop/bishop-archives/2010/CLDec2010\\_BISHOP.pdf](https://www.elcic.ca/clweb/bishop/bishop-archives/2010/CLDec2010_BISHOP.pdf)

## **Hymn: Blest Be the Tie That Binds ELW 656**

Blest be the tie that binds / our hearts in Christian love;  
the unity of heart and mind / is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne / we pour our ardent prayers;  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, / our comforts and our cares.  
We share our mutual woes, / our mutual burdens bear,  
and often for each other flows / the sympathizing tear.

From sorrow, toil, and pain, / and sin we shall be free;  
and perfect love and friendship reign / through all eternity.

## **Prayers of Intercession, read by Sonja**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

O God, call your people to be one, as you are one.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the work of scientist whose skill enrich our understanding and wellbeing,  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the vulnerable, especially elderly and their caretakers as well as people in abusive relationships living in closed quarters.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those engulfed in grief, those without supportive families, and for all who are isolated, powerless, or afraid.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for essential workers and the armed forces who give their lives to serve others.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for birthday children who celebrated their special day last week, be with Gisela, Eva and Peter during these trying times. Hold your protective hand over them.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Raise all your saints to eternal life. Until that day, we give you thanks for the faithful examples of those who have listened to your voice and now rest in you.  
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**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.**

## **C. SENDING**

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

### **Blessing**

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead  
raise you to new life, fill you with hope,  
and turn your mourning into dancing.  
Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Christ is risen, just as he said.  
Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

## Announcements

In light of the current COVID-19 outbreak, **all meetings and worship services are taking place virtually.**

- Sunday [Video Devotions](#) are on our [YouTube Channel](#). Please subscribe and comment.
- German [Radio Devotions](#) on our website and Sundays at 9.30 am on CHLO Radio AM 530
- [Virtual Sunday Coffee Hour](#) at 11:00 am through Zoom (link sent by email)
- [Sunday School lessons](#) and [Fabulous Fridays](#) on our website
- [Virtual Coffee Shop Talk](#), Mondays 7:00-9:00 pm through Zoom led by Vicar Silke Fahl
- [Coffee or Lunch with Job](#): Bible Reading and Discussion about the Book of Job led by Vicar Jordan Smith on Wednesday until June 24. Two opportunities: 8:30 am and 12:15 pm. Email [vicarsmith@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicarsmith@martinluther.ca) to sign up.
- [Virtual Prayer Circle](#), Wednesdays 5:30-6:00 pm through Zoom led by Solveig Christina Voss; we also have a Prayer Request Wall in the Church Foyer  
To request a prayer or join our prayer circle, email [prayers@martinluther.ca](mailto:prayers@martinluther.ca).
- [Give Peas a Chance](#)- A grow some, give some movement hosted by Martin Luther and Redeemer Lutheran with donated seeds. Register with Vicar Adam McComb at [vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca](mailto:vicarmccomb@martinluther.ca) to participate.
- [Corona-Care Calls](#)- Volunteers are continuing to call you with more information and to understand your needs. Let us know if you'd like to join the call team!
- Please phone or email the church office:
  - ◇ if we can help you in any way
  - ◇ if you'd like to volunteer by doing Sunday readings, spring cleaning and growing seeds
  - ◇ with feedback on what we're offering
  - ◇ to support our church and [donate](#). Best ways are PAR or send cheque to church office

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Organist & Choir Director: Linda Marcinkus

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