



May 15-16, 2021
The Weekend
after Ascension



He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink in abundance like the depths. He also brought streams out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. (Psalm 78:15-16)

Messiah Lutheran Church & School

2015 N Hastings Way
Eau Claire, WI 54703 ~ 715-834-2865
Affiliated with the *Church of the Lutheran
Confession* ~ C.L.C.

**Large-print copies are by the guest
book.**

For hearing assistance, ask an usher.

Today's Worship

For a printed liturgy, see the green liturgy folder, page 18.

Pre-Service Meditation: ¹⁵He split the rocks in the wilderness, And gave them drink in abundance like the depths. ¹⁶He also brought streams out of the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers. (Psalm 78:15-16)

Hymns: 515 427 Bulletin Hymn (tune of TLH 281)
788:1 761

Gospel Reading.....Matthew 20:1-16

¹“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. ⁵Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ ⁸“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ ⁹And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. ¹⁰But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. ¹¹And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ ¹³But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ ¹⁶So the last

will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Epistle Reading.....1 Corinthians 9:24-10:5

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. ^{10:1} Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Sermon Text.....Exodus 17:1-7

¹ Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?" ³ And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" ⁵ And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the

children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying,
“Is the LORD among us or not?”

GOD PROVIDES IN TRIAL AND STRIFE

- I. He provides despite complaint
- II. He provides in spite of circumstance
- III. He provides respite to His people

Guest Preaching Today: Pastor-elect Drew Naumann

We thank Pastor-elect Drew Naumann for sharing God’s Word with us today.
He will graduate from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary on May 22, and has
accepted the call to serve as pastor of Trinity Lutheran in Spokane, WA.



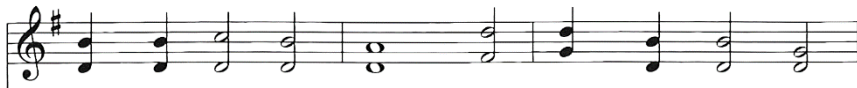
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Shepherd of Souls, Refresh and Bless

Original hymn by James Montgomery, 1787; text and tune in the public domain



- 1. Shep – herd of souls, re – fresh and bless Your
- 2. Hun – gry and thir – sty, faint and weak, As
- 3. With liv – ing wa – ter quench our need, That
- 4. Lord, may this life through us flow out To
- 5. All praise and hon – or to the Son The



chos – en pil – grim flock, While trav – ‘ling in this
You were here be – low, Our souls the joys of
by Your Word of grace, We’ll know from sin we
sin – ners ev – ‘ry where, En – light’ – ning hearts, dis –
Rock whom we a – dore, With Fa – ther and with



wil – der – ness, With wa – ter from the Rock.
hea – ven seek Which from Your sor – rows flow.
have been freed, Be – fore the Fath – er’s face.
pel – ling doubt That all Your grace may share.
Spir – it One Now and for – ev – er more!



Outgoing staff appreciation: We are preparing to bid a fond farewell to Messiah School staff members Carrie Reim, Kâren Franson, and Paul Tiefel III. Their service will be recognized on **Sunday, May 23**, during the 11 am service. Even if you attend a different service that weekend, please come for the 12 noon reception. It is still possible to contribute toward a monetary gift for those who have served the LORD and us so faithfully. Please contact Karen Falkenberg within the next few days if you would like to do so, at karen@gkf.name. Also, the Board is trying to gather pictures of these three individuals for a slide show presentation. Please send photos you may have, by May 7, to the school office at school.office@ecmessiah.org.

This Week at Messiah

**Masks required indoors by government mandate.
Sunday services live-streamed/archived at
eauclairemessiah.com.**

Sun, 5/16 9:00 am

Worship Service (Ushers #4,
Counters B)

10:00 am

Dove West

10:15 am

Bible Class/Sunday School/Young

Adults

11:15 am

Heritage Court (Hamilton Av.)

11:15 am

Heritage Assisted Living (Damon St.)

1:00 pm

Piano/Organ Recital at ILC gym

1:30 pm

Dove South

6:30 pm

Building Committee

Tues, 5/18 9:00 am

Koffee Klatsch

Wed, 5/19 1:45 pm

Lake Hallie – Care Facility Service

4:30 pm

Afternoon Catechism

6:30 pm

Council

Fri, 5/21

Messiah Last Day
Immanuel Last Day

Sat, 5/22

ILC Graduation

6:30 pm

Worship Service (Ushers #3)

Sun, 5/23

**Messiah 8th Grade Graduation Ceremony
at 11:00am**

9:00 am

Worship Service (Ushers #4,
Counters B)

10:00 am

Dove West

**Last
session**
... _ ..

11:00 am	Worship Service (Ushers #Extra Group)
11:15 am	Heritage Court (Hamilton Av.)
11:15 am	Heritage Assisted Living (Damon St.)
1:30 pm	Dove South
2:00 pm	Veterans

Upcoming Dates at Messiah:

- May 30th, 10:15 am Groundbreaking Ceremony
- June 6th, 11:00 am 8th Grade Confirmation
- June 7th/8th, Great Lakes Delegate Conference
- June 24th - 27th, CLC Convention at ILC
- July 12th - 16th, 1st VBS Session at ILC
- August 2nd - 6th, 2nd VBS Session at ILC

Announcements

Bible Class: This weekend Pastor Naumann will wrap up his series on the work of retired Pastor David Lau with a discussion of "The State of Lutheranism in the New Century." Both Bible class and Sunday school will be in recess for the summer after this weekend.

Young Adults Bible Study: Join us Sunday morning for our continuing series based on "*Uncommon Ground: Living Faithfully In a World of Difference*" by Timothy Keller and John Inazu. - Prof. Joel Gullerud

Piano/Organ Recital: The piano and organ students at Immanuel Lutheran High School and College will be having their annual Spring Recital "Student's Choice!" on Sunday, May 16, at 1 pm in the ILC Fieldhouse (please note the earlier start time.) Come and hear the wide variety of music chosen by this year's students! Laurie Lau - 715-575-8830

Concluding Activities at Immanuel: Friday, May 21, will be the final day of classes at ILC. Class Day will be held at 3 pm. The band will play during this event. At 7:30 pm there will be a concert of sacred music sung by the Mass Choir and Tour Choir. On Saturday, May 22, there will be the concluding Graduation worship service at 10 am. As the dates get closer, more details and updates will be posted on the ILC website (ilc.edu). We pray that the students will take what they have learned from the Word of God and treasure the Gospel by expressing their gratitude to the LORD Immanuel in their daily walk with Him.

Building project "Moving Day" Saturday, May 22, beginning at 10 am. Help is needed from many volunteers to move classroom furnishings from the school into the fellowship hall. With enough help, work should be completed before noon. If you are able, please plan to come and help on Saturday the 22nd at 10 am. (Royal Construction begins their outdoor excavation on May 17, and demolition of interior portions of the school on May 24.)

Wedding Affirmation: On May 16, 2020, Ryan Lord and Mackenzie Gilbertson were married in a small service by Pastor Naumann. This past Saturday their wedding affirmation was held in Messiah's sanctuary, officiated by Pastor Caleb. Ryan and Mackenzie are taking instruction classes, and reside in Chetek, WI. *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up"* (**Ecclesiastes 4:9** NIV84).

Vacation Bible School: There are two different sessions scheduled this summer, July 12-16th, and August 2nd-6th. Due to the Building Project both of these sessions will be held at ILC in the Academic Center (AC).

"Daily Rest" Subscription Renewal Time: The annual subscription rate is \$15 for four issues during the coming year. You may send a check, made out to "Messiah - Daily Rest" to

2015 N. Hastings Way, Eau Claire, WI 54703, or drop off your check or cash in the box on the narthex table under the cross. NEW - you may pay online via PayPal by sending \$15 to brucenaumann@gmail.com, and he will direct your funds to Messiah. The deadline for renewals or new subscriptions is May 31.

Feedback Needed on Forming a Medical Response Team:

Messiah is looking at the possibility of forming a medical response team to assist members and visitors who may experience medical emergencies while they are attending services at Messiah. We're looking for those who have formal training in medical care (doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, EMTs, first responders). You do not need to be currently licensed to serve. If may be able to serve, please contact Scott Wuerch at wuerchs@gmail.com or 715-828-7567.

Address/Phone Changes:

Nathan Rodebaugh (414) 339-3448
521 Ingram Drive
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Jack and Joelle
Mielke
921 E. Grant Ave.

CLC News: Pastor Chad Seybt, Morning Star, Fairchild/Trinity, Millston/Peace with God, Onalaska has been called as a part-time pastor to St. Paul's, Melrose, WI. <> Pastor Nathanael Mayhew, Grace, Sleepy Eye/Faith, New Ulm returned the call to Living Savior, Eden Prairie, MN. <> Mrs. Beth Sandeen has returned the call to serve as ILC's part-time on-campus mentor, the female counterpart in the on-campus counseling program, beginning in the 2021-22 academic year. Mrs. April Sydow, member at Messiah Lutheran in Eau Claire, WI, has now received this call. This role is to complement Mr. Steve Sydow in his current role as the part-time on-campus counselor. <> Pastor Johnathan Schnose has accepted the "full-time" (as opposed to the "vacancy") call to Bethel, Morris, MN. <> Mr. Caleb Noeldner, a member of Messiah, Hales Corners, WI has been called to be the primary teacher/principal of Valley Bible Academy - St. John's, Clarkston, WA.



Graduates: We are getting a list together of members who are graduating from high school, college or another school. Please pass on names to one of the pastors.



Service Preview for the Upcoming Weekend



God's Word Serving Us:

Bible Readings - Ezekiel 37:1-14, Acts 2:1-21, John 14:25-27
Bible Class - Recessed until Fall

Christians Serving Us:

Saturday 5/22 6:30 pm: Usher Team 5

Mike Markus	Mark Franson
Jim Sydow	Ben Thurow
Jim Lau	Andy Buck

Sunday 5/23 9:00 am: Usher Team 6

Darin Oster	Ben Oster
Tim Oster	Jeremy Plath
Isaiah Plath	Gabe Plath
Andrew Plath	

Sunday 5/23 11:00 am: Usher Team

Ross Roehl	Tim Noeldner
Steve Naumann	Brett Bailey
Jon Sandeen	

Counters for the week following 5/23 – C

Mike Markus, Tom Joos, Barry Schlegelmilch

Thank you!

Highlights from the May 2, 2021 Quarterly Voters' Meeting:

The meeting began with a devotion and prayer. **Various boards, committees, and the pastors** gave reports to the voters as outlined in the "Voter Packet," which can be reviewed at tinyurl.com/vpacket-05-02. <> **Elders/membership:** Nathan Rodebaugh was received into membership by transfer from Messiah, Hales Corners, WI. The Elders continue to serve our members on individual soul-care issues, and are outlining a plan to promote in-person fellowship once pandemic restrictions are lifted. <> **Pastors' report:** Our Lenten series was well received. 15 of our young people will be confirmed on June 6. Seminary student Drew Naumann will be preaching May 15-16. About 20 individuals are receiving adult instruction classes. Hospital and shut-in visits are getting easier due to the easing of COVID restrictions. Concern was expressed for those who have become distant from the Word during COVID restrictions. <> **Deacons:** COVID safety measures have been eased somewhat for our services. Masks and social distancing are still required, per local ordinance. Sunday school and Bible class will be recessed during the summer due to the building project. Due to increased attendance and to maintain social distancing, we have added a 3rd service at 11:00 am for several upcoming weekends. Services are resuming at several healthcare facilities. We thank Kari Behlmer for her service as part-time church secretary. Amanda Roth will increase her hours to cover many of Kari's tasks. We are making definite plans for doing a new church photo directory. Photos will be taken July 7-10 at no cost to members. More details will be coming.

<> Board of Education and Principal: Summer sessions for VBS are July 12-16 and August 2-6 at ILC. We are planning for teacher/staff recognition after 8th grade graduation service on May 23 for Kâren Franson, Carrie Reim & Paul Tiefel III. We are working on transitioning school technology duties after Mr. Tiefel leaves. Summer projects include reviewing our non-member enrollment policy and planning for furnishing the new classrooms after building project. School will end one week earlier this year (May 21) to accommodate construction. Next year's school calendar will not be finalized until mid-July, when we have a more definite for completion of classrooms. The security camera at the main school entrance had to be replaced. The Board approved school fees for next year. **<> Board of Property:** (See the list of completed and ongoing projects in the Voter Packet). **<> Messiah ILHS Student Grant Fund:** We have 6 applications for next school year, and the committee will work on a budget for those in mid-May. We had \$12,900 budgeted for this year and are currently about \$2,300 short for commitments this year. **<> Outreach:** We provided Silent Sunday School packets for the "Here We Grow Again" consignment event. We are installing Little Church Libraries, and are searching for a Memorial Day parade coordinator. Upcoming projects include our annual booth for the Northern Wisconsin State Fair, promoting summer VBS sessions at ILC, a one-day outdoor VBS session at a public park, an Evangelism Webinar to be held on August 22, distributing "Blessing Bags," and an outdoor banner advertising our online services. **<> Technology Committee:** Matt Kelly reported that our wireless mic system, which is about 20 years old, needs replacement. The cost for 3 high-quality headset mics, 3 handheld mics, and wireless receivers is about \$3,500. A motion carried to spend up to \$3,500 from the Undesignated Memorial Fund to purchase the new equipment. **<> Building Committee** - Dan Sydow reported; the slide presentation can be viewed [HERE](#). The committee continues to meet bi-weekly with the architect to work out final design details. Tom Beekman has been coordinating moving and putting together volunteer tasks for members. The estimated cost savings through volunteer labor is about \$80K. The contractors will soon mobilize onsite and grading will begin. After school ends on May 21, the school portion of the building will be emptied. A ground-breaking service will be held after worship on May 30, and Royal Construction begins onsite demolition and construction on June 1. The plan is to have a substantial portion of the new addition ready for the start of school in fall, with the rest (the last 4 classrooms and pastoral offices) to be completed during the fall semester. We plan to start the school year with older students in the sanctuary and fellowship hall as they have been this year. **<> Building Publicity and Finance Committee:** We have

\$200K in personal loan offers, with a number at 0% interest. Our CEF loan was approved for \$1.45M, but we will only need to borrow about \$1.2M. Every \$100K contributed saves us about \$5,500/year on mortgage payments. <> **Finances** [See the Voter Packet for the full report]: YTD receipts are \$173K, disbursements are \$185K, and the General Fund balance is about \$31K. Total receipts and disbursements are both up about \$7K over last year, but the budget is about \$14K over last year. Receipts for all funds are \$313K, and total disbursements are \$249K. Our total current debt is about \$950K.

<> **The meeting was adjourned** with the Lord's Prayer.

The Branches magazine is a publication designed and published by women of the CLC. It's time to renew, subscribe for the first time, or purchase gift subscriptions for others in your life who may benefit. Mother's Day, confirmations, and graduations are upon us! A subscription makes a great, year-long gift. \$15 for 4, 24 page issues each year. Make checks payable to "The Branches" - Laura Wales, 8727 Forestview Lane North, Maple Grove, MN 55369. Or, pay by PayPal at lewales@gmail.com.

CLC Financial Report - April

CLC Financial Report Operating Funds	Balance 7/1/2020	YTD Revenue	YTD Disbursed	Budget 10 Months	Balance 4/30/2021
General Fund	0	807,319	862,836	914,500	- 55,517
ILC Operations (incl. CLC subsidy)	0	1,160,302	1,080,220	1,148,450	80,082
Auxiliary Funds					
ILC Improvement Fund (IIF)	201,448	23,071	125,702		98,817
ILC Building Projects	14,542	2,152,483	1,083,198		1,083,827
Mission Development Fund (MDF)	84,054	206,797	147,812		143,039
Kinship	86,093	175,048	100,126		161,015
Church Extension Fund (CEF)	1,914,371	2,003,587	462,304		3,455,654
Student Aid Fund (SAF)	84,280	131,447	105,279		110,448
Reserve Fund	294,092	2,985	0		297,077
Total	\$2,678,880	\$4,695,418	\$2,024,421,		\$5,349,877

General Fund – April offerings: \$62,808 vs disbursements: \$76,834, resulted in a net shortfall for the month of \$14,026, increasing the General Fund deficit to –\$55,517. Offerings to date are short of our CBP estimated revenue by \$107,181, but YTD disbursements are \$51,664 less than estimated expenses. All are aware of the need to support the General Fund which provides the major funding for the Boards of Missions, Trustees, Regents, & Ed Pub, and the Boards are aware of the importance of remaining under budget. But most importantly, the Lord is aware of our needs & always provides.

ILC Operations – April revenue: \$84,577 (incl \$49,500 subsidy) vs disbursements: \$106,985, but still maintaining a substantial balance for this last month of the school year & last 2 months of the fiscal year, ending June 30. YTD ILC disbursements are \$68,230 less than YTD budgeted expenses.

ILC Building Projects – April offerings: \$1,031 vs disbursements of \$8,757 for Planning Committee expenses. April earnings (Div/Int) were \$3,886 (YTD \$59,605). The Committee is bringing a recommendation for the June 24 CLC Convention for a new gym and repurposing the old gym.

CEF – April revenue: \$20,377 (\$375 offerings, \$20,002 CEF loan payments) vs disbursements: \$3,927. The Trustees have funded CEF loans to Immanuel-Mankato (\$69,000) for gym repairs & Grace-Sleepy Eye (\$132,750), for a teacherage. Recently, they approved loan applications from Messiah, Eau Claire (\$1.45 million limit) for a new school addition, & Prince of Peace, Loveland (\$130,000 limit) for expansion of its church facility. Several others have inquired about CEF loans.

MDF – April offerings: \$6,436 vs disbursements: \$14,012, which includes \$10,000 for the 10th construction grant (of 12 planned) for the Nepal Bible Institute classroom building and quarters.

SAF – April receipts: \$18,772 (\$16,091 SAF loan payments) vs disbursements: \$7,274 for student loans & grants. SAF Endowment Account earnings (Div/Int) of \$35,938 for 10 mo YTD on a portfolio balance of \$1,512,340. Capital appreciation of the portfolio for April was \$55,386.

ILC PMPG – Public Ministry Prep Grants: YTD earnings: \$44,174 vs grants: \$32,400 to 9 teacher & 6 pastor students this school year. The PMP Endowment portfolio had a capital appreciation of \$68,079 for a current value of \$1,858,933. (Note: Since capital gains can fluctuate (+or-) each month, those portfolio gains & balances will be reported periodically & separately from the actual earnings reported each month.)

Kinship – Sponsors/Offerings: \$12,566 vs disbursements: \$490 (Admin, Nigeria Sem students).

James E. Sandeen, CLC Treasurer

Thomas J. Lentz, Chairman, CLC Board of Trustees

In Case You Missed It: <> Messiah School year is ending a week early, May 21 in place of the 28th to accommodate our early start to the building project. <> Sunday School and Bible Class will break for the summer building project. May 15-16th is the last session until sometime in September, yet to be determined. <> Extra worship services have been added at 11:00 am for Sunday, May 23rd (Messiah School 8th Grade Graduation) and June 6th (Confirmation).

In the hospital: Maxine Culver Morgan Lone are both recovering from surgery; Morgan is at home and Maxine is undergoing physical therapy at Dove West.

Messiah Shut-ins: Ida Drews (2455 Sawgrass Place #213, Altoona), Marge Eckel (1431 Peterson Ave.), Shirley Johnson (2512 New Pine Dr. Altoona), Mae Noeldner (3706 Damon St. #17), Ellen Knuth (Care Partners, 887 Brian Lane, Altoona), Connie Larson (1500 S. Edgewater Dr.), Tom and Linda Larson (3134 Eldorado Blvd.), Betty Nolting (HeatherWood Assisted

Living #213), Mavis Thelen (418 N. Barstow), Paul Tiefel, Sr. (2455 Sawgrass Rd #419, Altoona), Johanna Williams (2118 Augusta St.) and Shelly Williamson (Bellevue, IA).

Fruits of Faith Last Week ~ May 8 & 9, 2021

Weekend Worship: (Sat. 88 - Sun. 9:00am 120 - Sun. 11:00am 74) 282

Communion: (Sat. 23 - Sun. 9:00am 26 - Sun 11:00am 21) 70

Bible Class: (Sat. 13 - Sun. 41) 54 Sunday School: (Sat. 2 - Sun. __) __

Young Adults: Did not meet

Dove West: 11 Heritage Court: 13 Dove South: 8

Lake Hallie: 12

Veterans: 6

Weekend Online: (Worship: __, ILC Streaming: 29, Bible Class: __)
Ascension 5/13: __, Online: __

Weekly Offering Information

Offering Summary			Home Budget		Missions (CBP)		Building Fund	
2021 Budget			\$778,000.00		\$200,000.00		\$450,000.00	Goal
YTD Budget			\$284,269.00		\$73,077.00		\$490,446.16	Received to Date
YTD Offerings			\$258,945.38		\$71,531.75		\$3,395.00	Last Week (5/9)
Weekly Need			\$15,729.00		\$3,893.00			
Last Week (5/9)			\$10,525.00		\$2,991.75			
Amount Still Needed			\$519,054.62		\$128,468.25			

Given in memory of...

Laurie Brenn

25.00 Messiah ILHS Student Grants

Daily Bible Readings for Home Devotions; May 17-22, '21

Mon Acts 1:13-26 Judas had been lost from the select group of apostles (which Peter had been pondering for over a month) so after a short rehearsal of the career of Judas Iscariot and pertinent Scriptures (15-21), he presented a motion for filling the empty position (13-22). Two nominees had the right qualifications, so they put the matter before Jesus to choose (by the process of voting) between the two, and from heaven Jesus selected Matthias.

Tues John 17:6-19 We are eaves-dropping on Jesus while He was begging His Father to fill other gaps when He left—gaps that would be mended by bonding His disciples to His Word (6-8) and God’s saving Name (11-12). They could survive among hostiles in enemy territory (13-16), fortified and armored with God’s reliable Word (17) when they graduated (18-19).

Wed 1 John 4:13-21 God knows every dirty corner of our mind, every stinky centimeter of our character, every crooked streak of our life. Understanding what we are, God still loves us anyway—loves us enough to bear our sins on His own shoulders, reach down and pull us free of Satan’s grip, cuddle and kiss us. We are not afraid of God (17-18), for we know He loves us!

Thurs Psalm 8 God is great as Creator and Preserver of the Universe (1,3), also entrusting us humans with the care for Earth’s living creatures (6-8). *“How Great Thou Art”* (a familiar gospel song) in stanza three gives the best reason for lifting our voices in soaring praise to our great God. *“That on the cross my burden gladly sharing He bled and died to take away my sin. Then sings my soul, my savior God, to Thee, ‘How great Thou art!’”*

Fri Acts 1:9-11 Jesus’ Ascension is put into the record with a dozen words—in contrast to the longer focus on those He left behind. Why this contrast? Because disciples need to focus on the assignments given them on Earth during their time of grace, to prepare themselves and others for Jesus’ return, which we should not only patiently await, but eagerly anticipate.

Sat Acts 26:1-11 Finally a day in court—even if it was only a pretrial hearing! Paul stepped up to the mic, gestured for attention, and set the record straight—that a) his Jewish background was impeccable, b) his religion was founded on God’s promises of the Resurrection (4-8), and c) Jesus did not fit into either a) or b). In fact, Paul was committed to the belief that Jesus was an impostor and that His followers should be eradicated—so he intimidated them, tortured them until they cursed Jesus, and chased them down when they fled and sought refuge in foreign lands. He had gone totally berserk! Then Jesus stopped him in his tracks.

y tuned.

Sta