



St. John's – Kongsvinger Lutheran Parishes  
Glacial Ridge Conference  
SW MN Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# PARISH PARTNER

Vol. 31 Issue 5  
May 2026

## “KEEP IT SIMPLE” WORSHIP SCHEDULE

### Worship Services at 9:30 A.M.

**\*\*First/third/fifth Sundays at Kongsvinger**

**\*\*Second/Fourth Sundays at St. John's**

### Holy Communion Services:

**\*\*First Sunday of the month at Kongsvinger**

**\*\*Fourth Sunday of the month at St. John's**

\*\*\*\*\*

### Kongsvinger Church 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is September 20, 2026.

We encourage committees (Food, History, Advertising, Program, Grounds, Decorating) to begin meeting as soon as possible. There is a committee worksheet in the church basement with committee members listed. If you have volunteered for a committee, please contact the other members listed and get your meeting scheduled.

WE DO NEED YOUR HELP! If you have family/friends/former members in mind to invite to our Anniversary celebration, please get their names and addresses to Mary Werk at the Parish office as soon as possible. The “Save the Date” cards are ready!

P.O. Box 97  
Donnelly, MN, 56235  
Phone: 320-246-3211  
E-mail: stjkongs@runestone.net

St. John's  
+  
Kongsvinger  
Lutheran Parish  
is a member of the  
Glacial Ridge  
Conference  
of the  
Southwestern Minnesota  
Synod  
of the  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America

**STAFF**  
Pastor Rochelle Anderson

Parish Secretary  
Mary L. Werk

Kongsvinger Organist  
Sue Erdahl-Nelson

St. John's Organist  
Peggy Wilke

**OFFICERS**  
President  
Chad Smith (K)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (SJ)

Secretary  
Algene Larson/  
Laura Lehman (K)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (SJ)

Treasurer  
Mary Werk (K)  
Jan Greiner (SJ)

Financial Secretary  
Nancy Thompson (K)  
Judy Burner (SJ)

Women's Group President  
KLCW - Co-led by Algene  
Larson and Mary Werk  
SJ WELCA - Donna Eystad

Women's Group  
Council Representative  
KLCW - Cork Loge  
SJ WELCA - Della Dunn

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Deb Erickson, Chad  
Smith, Jody Loher, Pat  
Smith, David Larson, and  
Blake Flaten (K)

Donna Eystad, Greg  
Greiner, Jack Kopacek,  
and John Kopacek (SJ)

# PARISH POPCORN

## LIVE AND ON-DEMAND VIDEO STREAMING

### PLEASE NOTE CHANGES!!

Worship services originating from Kongsvinger will now be available to watch live – or watch later at your convenience – on our YouTube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@st.johnskongsvinger>

To watch live, visit the link above and click on the 'LIVE' tab to access the next scheduled service. To watch a past worship service, click the 'HOME' tab and look for the date in the title. All worship services will be archived at this location.

Broadcast of Kongsvinger worship services on Morris Access TV will be on first, third, and fifth Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m., **AND ADDITIONALLY ON THE FIRST, THIRD, AND FIFTH SUNDAYS** at 1:30 p.m. It is on **MediaCom channel 8** (OR on **MediaCom channel 117-2 for users with a digital box**).

## KONGSVINGER DO-DAYS

We extend an invitation to anyone who might like to spend a day (or an hour or two) with us, to join us on Tuesdays, at 9:30 a.m. at the Kongsvinger Parish Hall. Bring a sack lunch for noon and enjoy participating, or just come and enjoy a cup of coffee and watch the process of creating our quilts. If you might be interested in sewing quilt tops at home - at your own speed - we can help you get started. You are always welcome to be part of the ministry. Donations of gently used sheets, fabric, and sewing thread are always welcome, as well as financial contributions to assist with batting costs and shipping expenses.

## PASTOR TIM'S CARING BRIDGE UPDATE:

As I was leaving church this morning (4/19/26), Nebraska Medical Center called and told me they have a liver for me. We will be leaving for Omaha in the next few hours, and check in tonight for surgery tomorrow morning. Cyndi will go with me as my caregiver. We will be there for 4-5 weeks if all goes well. We don't know many of the details. Your prayers will be appreciated and coveted.

Pax Christi, Tim & Cyndi

## THANK YOU!!

To all our prayer warriors for your continuing prayers. When we aren't able to do anything else — we can always pray!

To all those who continue to do quiet (and often unseen) acts—being God's hands and feet.

*To the world you may be just one person, but to one person, you may be the world.*

To our congregation members for remembering your church with your financial offerings. Your continued generous support is appreciated!

To ushers, musicians, lectors, altar guilds, deacons, trustees, coffee fellowship servers, and all who work to keep our worship services running smoothly.

"THANK YOU" seems inadequate to express our appreciation to all our members. You ARE God's church— caring for God's people!!

## THANK YOU!!

**JUST A REMINDER:** If you or someone you know is hospitalized, in a nursing home, or homebound, and would appreciate a pastoral contact or Holy Communion, please contact the Parish Office at 246-3211. Even though you may be asked your religious affiliation during check-in, the hospital/nursing homes don't share that information with us - unless you specifically request that they do. Updates to the Parish Office are always appreciated.

**WEBSITE DISCLAIMER:** With our website active, we would like to know if any of our members prefer to not have pictures of themselves or their children included on the site. They would likely be group photos of activities of the churches without names attached. If you do not want pictures of you or your family included, please let the Parish office know. Thank you!

## Baptismal Anniversaries

- 1 – Mikell Dunn
- 2 – Dona Greiner
- 4 – Nancy Thompson
- 7 – Paige Strand
- 8 – Jean Lawyer
- 9 – Erik Whitemore
- 10 – Christina Berger, Jill Koch
- 11 – Clifford Johnson
- 13 – Laura Ennen
- 14 – LaVonne Kloos
- 15 - Gertie Werk, Jane Sassenfeld, Brenden Hughes
- 17 – Taya Lehman
- 20 – Charles Larson, Brian Ennen
- 22 – Jerry Werk, Paul Kloos, Tiffany Thorstad
- 25 – Toni Hughes, Garrett Eystad
- 30 – Hannah Larson, Amanda Casselton, Arne Larson



- Judy Burner
- Warren Rathke
- Deb Erickson
- Harry Kruize
- Renee Dahlen
- Pastor Tim and Cyndi Olson
- Bernice Erdahl
- Gertie Werk
- Governmental leaders around the world
- Conflicts around the globe
- Area military members and their families
- Our homebound members; residents of nursing homes and care centers
- Our agricultural community



## PARISH PRAYER CHAIN MINISTRY

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

*THE MISSION OF THE PRAYER MINISTRY IS TO PRAY, TEACH OTHERS TO PRAY, PROVIDE PRAYER OPPORTUNITIES, AND PARTICIPATE IN THE FULFILLMENT OF OUR CHURCH'S VISION AND MISSION AS WE ARE INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.*

### Prayers for Mothers

Mothers are a precious gift from the Lord, and this time of year we can be intentional about celebrating and making moms feel special. Mothers come in many forms - birth, adoption, stepmothers, foster mothers, mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, mentors, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, and heart-felt friendships. Each form of motherhood brings joys and challenges, all of which can use prayer and God's help. Scripture teaches that women and motherhood are to be honored and are part of God's beautiful design for humanity.

*Heavenly Father,*

*We lift up our mothers to you and ask that you would bless them with the wisdom which comes from heaven. We ask that you bless all moms with the peace that surpasses all understanding. Let Your blessing be on them so that they may rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances of life. Bless them with a deep hope in You alone. We ask that you would anoint them – that they would bear the fruit of the Spirit, that they would not labor in vain, and that You would bless the work of their hands. Lord, bless them with love, hope, and faith as they go about their days. Bless them with eyes to see that all they do for their children and their family provide ways to glorify You. We pray that all mothers would be blessed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!*




Excerpt from Crosswalk.com

- 2 - Jason Strand, Lindsey Mann
- 3 - LaVonne Kloos
- 4 - Mark Janachovsky, Bruce Erdahl
- 6 - Charles Larson
- 7 - Sarah Kaehler, Lori Oelke
- 9 - Richard Olsen, Kristin Olson
- 11 - Howard Anderson, Courtney Lehman
- 16 - Olivia Andert
- 19 - Addison Cihak
- 20 - Bill Kruize, Brittany Messner
- 21 - Hannah Christianson
- 22 - Harley Strand
- 23 - Cody Eystad, Kali Jo Sayles, Clara Dunn
- 25 - Kristi Larson, Angela Lachowitz
- 26 - Nick Lehman
- 27 - Richard Strand, Brandon Pry, Lee Eystad
- 29 - Julie Bakken



- 1 - Levi & Christina Berger
- 3 - Steve & Karalee Brandner
- 6 - Glenn & Diane Amundson
- 7 - Blane & Samantha Plecity
- 13 - Joe & Jessica Oelke
- 19 - Aaron & Kayla Erdahl
- 25 - Charles Larson & Philip Spoehr
- 29 - Scott & Beth Heinrich; Audrey & Nancy Henrichs



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>May 2026</b>					1 ·HAPPY· <i>May Day</i>	2 SWMN Synod Women's Convention in Willmar
3 <b>JOINT Service of Holy Communion</b> 9:30 a.m. (K) <i>Coffee fellowship</i>  Last day of Sunday School with Adopted Grandparent event 10:45 a.m.  4-H and Sunday School kitchen project - 2 p.m.  Rendsville 4-H Club meeting.	4	5 Do-Days 9:30 a.m. (K)	6 <b>Recorded Message - 11 a.m.</b>  *Last day of Element Confirmation - 6:30 p.m. at First Lutheran, Morris	7 <b>KLCW MEETING</b> 1:30 p.m.  <b>National Day of Prayer</b>	8	9
10 <b>JOINT Service</b> 9:30 a.m. (SJ)  <i>Coffee fellowship</i>  <i>happy Mother's Day</i>	11	12 Do-Days 9:30 a.m. (K)	13 <b>Recorded Message - 11 a.m.</b>  <b>Church Council Meetings (K)</b> • St. John's at 6:30 PM • Joint 7:00 PM • Kongsvinger at 8:00 PM	14  Ascension Day	15	16
17 <b>Baccalaureate</b> <b>JOINT Service</b> 9:30 a.m. (K) with Pr. Maddie Elliot from LCBC  *recording service for 5/31 KMRS broadcast  <i>Coffee fellowship</i>	18	19 Do-Days 9:30 a.m. (K)	20 <b>Recorded Message - 11 a.m.</b>  <b>June 2026 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE</b>	21	22	23
24 <b>Pentecost</b> <b>JOINT Service of Holy Communion</b> 9:30 a.m. (SJ)  <i>Coffee fellowship</i>	25 <b>MEMORIAL DAY</b>  ***** <b>REMEMBER AND HONOR</b> 	26 Do-Days 9:30 a.m. (K)	27 <b>Recorded Message - 1 p.m.</b>	28	29	30
31 <b>JOINT Service</b> 9:30 a.m. (K) with Pr. John Smith  <i>Coffee fellowship</i>  KMRS Radio broadcast						

# WORSHIP & PRAYER

## *FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER*

*MAY 3, 2026*

### **Lessons**

*Acts 7:55-60;*  
*Psalms 31:1-5, 15-16;*  
*Peter 2:2-10;*  
*John 14:1-14*

### **Liturgy**

JOINT Holy Communion Service at Kongsvinger 9:30 a.m.

**Lector** Scarlet Bergstrom-McKee(K)

**Acolyte** Daphne Oelke (K)

### **Parish Prayers**

For our Sunday School students, families, and teachers as summer break begins.

### **Church**

The ELCA and ELCA Region 9; the Southeastern Michigan Synod; Efforts of Lutheran World Relief; and Trinity Lutheran Church (Cyrus)

## *SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER*

*MAY 10, 2026*

### **Lessons**

*Acts 17:22-31;*  
*Psalms 66:8-20;*  
*Peter 3:13-22;*  
*John 14:15-21*

### **Liturgy**

JOINT Worship Service at St. John's 9:30 a.m.

**Lector** Jeanne Ennen (SJ)

### **Parish Prayers**

Of thanksgiving for God's gift of Mothers!

### **Church**

The ELCA and Trinity Lutheran Seminary; the Northwestern Lower Michigan Synod; Farmers and all those who work in agriculture; and Glenwood Lutheran Church (Glenwood)

## *SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER*

*MAY 17, 2026*

### **Lessons**

*Acts 1:6-14;*  
*Psalms 68:1-10, 32-35;*  
*Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11;*  
*John 17:1-11*

### **Liturgy**

JOINT Worship Service at Kongsvinger 9:30 a.m.

**Lector** Jan Greiner (K)

### **Parish Prayers**

For high school/higher education graduates - that God walk with you in your future plans.

### **Church**

The ELCA and Wartburg Theological Seminary; the Northwestern and Northeastern Ohio Synod; Beginning ELCA congregations; and Barsness and Chippewa Falls Lutheran Churches (Glenwood)

## *DAY OF PENTECOST*

*MAY 24, 2026*

### **Lessons**

*Acts 2:1-21;*  
*Psalms 104:24-34, 35b;*  
*Corinthians 12:3b-13;*  
*John 20:19-23*

### **Liturgy**

JOINT Holy Communion Service at St. John's 9:30 a.m.

**Lector** Joan Kopacek (SJ)

**Acolyte** Royce Erdahl (SJ)

### **Parish Prayers**

As we remember those who serve/have served our country and our loved ones.

### **Church**

The ELCA and Luther Seminary; the Southwestern Ohio Synod; Small town and rural congregations; and Immanuel and Indherred Lutheran Churches (Starbuck)

## *HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY*

*MAY 31, 2026*

### **Lessons**

*Genesis 1:1-2; 4a;*  
*Psalms 8;*  
*2 Corinthians 13:11-13*  
*Matthew 28:16-20*

### **Liturgy**

JOINT Worship Service at Kongsvinger 9:30 a.m.

**Lector** Cork Loge (K)

### **Parish Prayers**

For God's blessings for families in their summer plans and activities.

### **Church**

The ELCA and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary; the New Jersey synod; Synod Assembly planning and parathion; and Fron Lutheran Church (Starbuck)



  
*Congratulations*  
**TO OUR GRADUATES!**

**SCARLET MADELINE BERGSTROM-MCKEE**

Graduate - Morris Area High School

Parents: Joel and Jessica Oelke and Don McKee, Jr.

Future Plans: Moorhead Technical College, Moorhead, MN (Ag Business)

**BRYCE DONALD LEHMAN**

Graduate - Morris Area High School

Parents: Nick and Laura Lehman

Future Plans: Army National Guard



**LYDIA SUZANNE POLLARD**

Graduate - Morris Area High School

Parents: Christy Haynes and Brent Pollard

Future Plans: MN State University Moorhead,  
Moorhead, MN (Psychology)

*Class Of*  
**2026**

# WOMEN OF THE ELCA NEWS

## **St. John's WELCA NO MONTHLY MEETING**

**WANTED:** Sheets or bedding for use as liners in quilts. Flat sheets preferred, but if Queen or King size – fitted is OK. May drop off in box in St. John's entry. Any questions, please call Joan Kopacek. (VFW/Legion sewing group)

### **COMMUNITY EVENT - PILLOW FLUFF:**

At By-Lo in Hancock from 6-8 p.m. on Monday, May 11.

At Old #1 in Morris from 7:30 A.m.-3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12.

There will be professional consultation before your cleaning commitment. Prices (including new ticking): Standard size - \$15.95/Queen - \$17.95/ King - \$18.95. This pillow cleaning service is a fundraiser for the Veterans Sewing Group. We receive a commission for each pillow cleaned/sold. The money raised (donations are welcome) is used to buy material for our quilt making. Our quilts are given to Veterans in nursing homes, shelters, etc.

## **Kongsvinger Women of the ELCA May 7, 2026**

**1:30 p.m.**

### **At Legacy Living in Morris**

CONTACT PERSON: Algene Larson

BIBLE STUDY THEME: "The Call for Justice" (Amos)

BIBLE STUDY LEADER: Pr. Rochelle Anderson

ALTAR COMMITTEE: Laura Lehman and Lorie Oelke

BANNER COMMITTEE: Jon and Bev Larson

COMMUNION BREAD: Penny Melberg

SUNSHINE LADY: Becky Bergstrom

BULLETIN BOARD: Jessie Oelke

HOSTESS: Gertie Werk and Mary Werk

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP** for May will be served by Circle Three. Baccalaureate Sunday (May 17) is hosted by Circle Two.

**SAVE THE DATE: 2026 SWMN SYNODICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION CONVENTION** will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at Calvary Lutheran Church (302 Olena Avenue) in Willmar, MN. Special performance by Sweetwater Revival.

**COOKBOOKS:** KLCW has received the re-print of our original "Blue" Cookbook - in time for our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The cost of the books will be \$12 each. Contact the Parish office if you would like to purchase one.

**THANK YOU, KONGSVINGER KLCW:** Thank you for your generous donation to Churches United. Your kindness does not go unnoticed - we are VERY grateful.

Steph Ressler, Churches United, Moorhead, MN

### **Note: WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP...**

We have found a place where we can replace portions of the Confirmation picture display in the Parish Hall. If you are interested in financially supporting this project or working on updating the display in time for our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, please contact the Parish Office as soon as possible.



# PARISH HAPPENINGS

**OPEN HOUSE GRADUATION PARTY** in honor of Scarlet Bergstrom-McKee will be held on Saturday, May 23, 2026 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Bret and Lorie Oelke's home at 15734 200<sup>th</sup> Ave., Barrett, MN 56311. Everyone is welcome!

**LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION SPRING GATHERING** will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at Calvary Lutheran Church in Willmar (in conjunction with the SWMN Synod Women's Convention)> Cost is \$25 per person. Our day begins at 7:30 a.m. as we load the Lutheran World Relief quilts/kits that are brought to the convention. Event registration begins at 8 A.m. Open to all men in the SWMN Synod.

**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS** are scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at Kongsvinger Parish Hall. St. John's Council will meet at 6:30 p.m.; Joint Council will meet at 7:00 p.m.; and Kongsvinger Council will meet at 8:00 p.m. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. Quorums are necessary to conduct church business.

**BACCALAUREATE SUNDAY** is Sunday, May 17, 2026. Our "Class of 2026" graduates will be recognized and a coffee hour reception will be served in the church basement following worship. Our high school graduates are Scarlet Bergstrom-McKee, Lydia Pollard, and Bryce Lehman. Everyone is welcome to join us and congratulate our graduates.

**\*JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE** is Wednesday, May 20, 2026.

**KONGSVINGER LUTHERAN CHURCH** will be celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on September 20, 2026.

## **LEFSE MEMORIES TO SHARE?**

Hannah Larson is looking for photos (labeled), stories, anecdotes, memories, etc. to include in the Kongsvinger Lefse Book. Items can be left at the Parish Office. Deadline is July 1 so the book can be compiled/printed/delivered by the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Please call Hannah at 651-249-3496 if you have any questions.

## **\$25 THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS DURING YOUR BIRTHDAY MONTH!**

Thrivent is giving members an additional \$25 in their Choice Dollars account during their birthday month. These funds must be designated to an eligible non-profit by the end of your birthday month or they will expire. Log in to your Thrivent account to direct the funds to any non-profit organization of your choice.

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## **Community News and Events**

**"GATHERINGS" PEDERSEN FUNERAL HOMES** - We are encouraging anyone who wants to attend the gatherings - that the meetings will continue but we will not be there to facilitate them. The meetings will continue to be held on the second Tuesday of every month (March 10) at noon at Old #1 in Morris.

**STEVENS COUNTY FOOD SHELF** supplies a five-day emergency or supplemental food package to residents of Stevens County. There is no fee for this service. Clients must provide proof of residency. The food shelf welcomes donations of foods or financial contributions to support our community. **PLEASE NOTE HOURS** (to accommodate the increasing after-work traffic) The Stevens County Food Shelf is open: Monday: 2:30-3:30 10:30-11:30 a.m.; p.m.; Tuesday: 5:30-6:30 p.m.; Wednesday: Thursday: 5:30-6:30 p.m.; and Friday: 10:30-11:30 a.m. The food shelf is located on the corner of Seventh Street and Iowa Avenue on the northeast side of Morris.

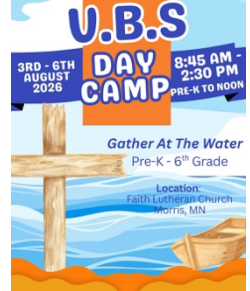
# EDUCATION CORNER

\*Sunday School will meet from 10:45 to 11:30 a.m. at the Kongsvinger Parish Hall.

\*\***MAY 3** will be the last Sunday of Sunday School for the year.

**ADOPTED GRANDPARENT EVENT:** Our Adopted Grandparents are invited to join us for Sunday School on Sunday, May 3, 2026, for our final lesson before summer break. We can't wait to learn and celebrate with you. We are planning a game of Bible Jeopardy. Invitations have been sent. Light refreshments will be served. We hope you are able to join us that day!

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL "Gather At the Water"** will be held August 3-6, 2026, from 8:45 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. (pre-kindergarten until noon only). Open to pre-school through sixth grade. Event will be held at Faith Lutheran Church in Morris. Registration begins on July 6, and we'll have a QR code/link for families to use. Green Lake Lutheran Ministries will be leading VBS this year.



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## ELEMENT CONFIRMATION

Last day of Element Confirmation (before summer break) will be Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at First Lutheran Church in Morris.

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## LUTHER CREST BIBLE CAMP

Summer is almost here, and we are counting down the days until another incredible season of camp begins! We cannot wait to welcome campers of all ages for a summer filled with faith, friendship, and unforgettable adventure at Luther Crest. Now is the perfect time to begin planning. Be sure to check out all of our program options on our website ([www.luthercrest.org](http://www.luthercrest.org)) to find the perfect week for your camper, yourself, or your family. There truly is something for everyone. We welcome all ages (kids, teens, and adults) to these fantastic camp experiences!

**LCBC Women's Week:** Luther Crest Bible Camp's Women's Week will be held June 21 - 26, 2026. Come away to Luther Crest for a meaningful and refreshing week designed just for women. Enjoy powerful speakers, worship, fellowship, and time to rest and reconnect in the beauty of camp. Explore your faith, go for a swim, take a hike, enjoy meals (prepared for you and cleaned up by camp staff), and just enjoy the great outdoors. Join us for the whole week or just a day or two — whichever fits your summer schedule best! We look forward to seeing you!



## NOTES OF *thanks*

I would like to thank everyone for the many cards I received and for the prayers while I was in the hospital in Fargo and at the Barrett Care Center. I appreciated your care and concern for me. Thanks again! Judy Burner

I would like to thank the Sunday School kids for the warm "Blanket of Love" given to me after my surgery and while I am recuperating at the Barrett Care Center. It was nice of you to remember me. God Bless - Harry Kruize

### St. John's/Kongsvinger Lutheran Parish:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." (Phil 1:3) God has blessed our ministry through the generosity of wonderful friends like you! By being a part of our Baby Bottle Fundraiser campaign, you have helped us reach an unbelievable goal—one which we could not have even imagined. In less than one month, you opened your hearts and your pocketbooks and generously gave us \$1,147.89! Options for Women/Morris would like to thank you for your donation and for the part you have played in helping women and families in our six-county area as well as in Morris. Precious lives will be saved because of your generosity, and my prayer for you is that God will richly bless you for helping to make our ministry happen.

Together for life,  
Jennifer Cronen, Executive Director,  
Options for Women, Morris, MN

## SCRIPTURE/SERMON SUMMARIES — MAY, 2026

### May 3 - Read 1 Peter 2:2-10

1 Peter helps us to imagine the meaning of Christ's resurrection for our lives. Jesus is the living stone rejected by people, yet "precious in God's sight" (v. 4). As followers of Jesus, we are living stones built into a sacred community, "a holy priesthood" (v. 5). The imagery in this reading is expanded to explore its spiritual depth. We are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (v. 9). This rich language and imagery all lead us to understand the treasured life we have. We are called to speak of God in Jesus Christ, the one who has brought us out of darkness and into a precious and holy light. Once we were those who had not received mercy, those who were not God's people. Now we are God's people and we live lives filled with mercy and honor to be God's chosen people. Jesus' resurrection changed our lives from desperation to empowerment and joy. It is no wonder that we are to be like babes, thirsting for spiritual milk so we may grow into a life that is our inheritance and delight.

*Discuss:* How does being one of God's chosen people affect how you live your life?

### May 10 - Read John 14:15-21

The Gospel of John weaves themes into one another like a beautiful tapestry. That is clearly what is happening in John 14. At the heart of it, Jesus will not abandon his followers. He loves them and wants them to love him by keeping his commandments to love one another (John 13:34). Jesus will remain with us, his followers, through the presence of "another Advocate" (v. 16), just as Jesus himself is an advocate (1 John 2:1). The word "advocate" in the original Greek also means counselor, helper, or intercessor. The Advocate is here to help us. The other advocate is the Holy Spirit, described as "the Spirit of truth" (v. 17), just as Jesus is seen as "the truth" in John 14:6. After Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, he is still with us through the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit makes Christ a reality in our lives today so that we may love one another and the world as God does (John 3:16). We are not abandoned after Jesus' ascension; we are empowered by the Spirit of truth to live out Jesus' new commandment to love one another and the world.

*Discuss:* How has the Holy Spirit helped you along your faith journey?

### May 17 - Read John 17:1-11

Being with God in eternity seems to be something we anticipate after we die, but not in the Gospel of John. Eternity is understood as a life that begins now and is experienced through faith in "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (v. 3). Jesus speaks of his glory. The hour of his glory is his suffering, death, and resurrection. We participate in Jesus' glory as those who remain in the world now protected by God. Eternal life is experienced as a life of glory that knows suffering and also knows God in Christ. A personal relationship with Jesus is not private. We live in eternity now as the body of Christ in the world together. Therefore, Jesus prays that all of his followers "may be one, as we are one," (v. 11) - that is, as Jesus and the Father are one. Eternal life involves a relationship to God that knows, trusts, and believes in Jesus as the one who is with the Father. One may ask, "How do you think you will experience eternity after you have died?" John's question would be, "How do you experience eternity now, living with God and with one another in a world that God loves?"

*Discuss:* What difference does it make for you to know that eternity is now, and not just after you die?

### May 24 - Read John 20:19-23

Those first disciples were fearful and huddled in a locked room. We all have had experiences of being frozen in fear and wanting to hide. Jesus knows this. Just as he did with those first disciples, Jesus enters our anxious lives, sends us out of our locked rooms, and releases us from our fearful confinements. The crucified and risen Jesus enters our lives with the power of the Holy Spirit. He sends out his followers of all generations to conquer those destructive forces with a peace that dares to forgive. On Pentecost we are reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit that breathes Jesus' life-giving and life-freeing forgiveness into the world. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus sends out disciples like us into the world with peace. That peace is not simply a good feeling filled with the absence of struggles. Jesus' peace is a life-giving power to conquer our fears and timidity that we may courageously extend a word of divine forgiveness to others.

*Discuss:* How has the Holy Spirit moved you to act with the power of peace and forgiveness for others?

### May 31 - Read 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

This reading includes the trinitarian language anticipated for this special day: the grace of Jesus, the love of God as Creator and Father, and the unity of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses this language and understanding of God as being the strength of the Corinthian house churches. Paul's two letters to the Corinthians indicate that these house churches seem to be divided by lots of conflict. At the same time they are closely united because of God. Paul tells the people to "be restored," and "live in peace" (v. 11). God's love and reconciling power make it all possible. The embrace of this family-like community is demonstrated by Paul's urging them to greet each other with a "holy kiss" (v. 12). All of this is expected by Paul, not because of the leadership or wisdom of the people, but because of "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit" (v. 13) that is promised to be with them all. For Paul, it is the Triune God who makes the reconciled life of the Christian community possible.

*Discuss:* How does Paul's description of God help the church seek reconciliation?