

A Mission Congregation of the ELCA
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
P. O. Box 64 - 8520 Oakes Rd - Pittsburg, Ohio 45358



Ethiopian Eunuch Baptized
April 25, 2021

- **Prelude** “Majesty; The Haven of Rest; I Love to Tell the Story” **Roxanne Groff**

- **Office of the Acolyte and Ringing of the Bell**

- **Welcome** **Pastor Mel Musser**

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Risen Lord,

C: We admit that we are slow to believe, and even slower to follow where you lead us. We doubt your promise, divide your people, and fail to proclaim the power of your resurrection. We choose to live small lives when you have given us the biggest gift of all: your eternal life. Forgive us. Raise us up to a place where we can serve you faithfully.

P: Christ is arisen, bringing gifts of life, mercy and pardon for sin! Believe that you are forgiven, and go out and live in the joy of your Lord’s resurrection in the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

*** HYMN OF PRAISE “Baptized in Water” ELW 456**



1 Bap-tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spir - it, cleansed by the
 2 Bap-tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spir - it, dead in the
 3 Bap-tized in wa - ter, sealed by the Spir - it, marked with the



blood of Christ our king: heirs of sal - va - tion, trust-ing his
 tomb with Christ our king: one with his ris - ing, freed and for -
 sign of Christ our king: born of the Spir - it, we are God’s



prom - ise, faith - ful - ly now God’s praise we sing.
 giv - en, thank-ful - ly now God’s praise we sing.
 chil - dren; joy - ful - ly now God’s praise we sing.

* Please stand if able

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*** APOSTOLIC GREETING**

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

C: **And also with you.**

*** PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray... God of truth, You have revealed yourself to people of every time, place and situation. May we not put limits on where or how your Spirit might capture human hearts and spread the word of your gospel far and wide, for the sake of our risen Lord.

C: **Amen.**

• SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 8:26-39

P: Our scripture reading for this day is from Acts, Chapter 8.

C: **Glory to you O Lord.**

²⁶Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” ³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

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³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ** (*Spoken*)

- **SERMON**

Pastor Mel Musser

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Savior Jesus

Christ, amen.

Do you remember the movie Raiders of The Lost Ark from 1981? To refresh your memory... Indiana Jones discovers the Ark of the Covenant, the 4-foot long container holding the two tablets of the 10 commandments God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai. (SLIDE) Jones takes the Ark back to America, and at the end of the movie you see it being stored with millions of other crates in a humungous warehouse building, lost once again, but this time to the bureaucracy of government (SLIDE)... That's fiction, of course, but it makes me wonder where the Ark of the Covenant might be today? Was it destroyed or is it intact and in a cave somewhere waiting to be found again like the Dead Sea Scrolls, or is somebody keeping it, hidden away in a no-name building?

The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia claims it has the ark (SLIDE). They say when the Queen of Sheba, ruler of Ethiopia, visited King Solomon around 1,000 B.C., she witnessed first-hand Solomon's great wisdom, the great temple, and the

great land of Israel. She also got pregnant by him and bore his child when she returned to her homeland. Years later, her son returned to Israel to visit his father. Unbeknownst to her son, his companions stole the ark and brought it back to Ethiopia! Today it's being guarded by a group of priests in a chapel high in the mountains of northern Ethiopia. Nobody but the priests are allowed to see it.

Quite a story! I have no idea if it's true... I read it on the internet so it must be true, right? One thing we do know is that the Christian church in Ethiopia is ancient. In fact, since about 350 A.D. Christianity has been the official religion of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the oldest churches in the world! It just might be that in our Bible reading for today we find the reason why. An Ethiopian official on his way home from Jerusalem hears the Good News of the Gospel and becomes a Christian. (SLIDE)

I think God positioned this scripture reading for us to hear this day as a sign for us. We debated the timing and how to loosen the Covid-19 restrictions we've placed on ourselves at our Church Council meeting last Wednesday. One of our topics was whether to return to Sunday School and how to go about it in safe manner. I believe it's no coincidence this scripture reading came up on the Sunday after our discussions. After all, it's still true today as it was in the first century for the Ethiopian, that none of us can understand without someone to guide us. If we

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continue to keep our Sunday School closed, how will our children understand the lessons we all learned from our time in Sunday School? Marge will have an announcement about Sunday School and Vacation Bible School coming soon. I will also start back with Adult Sunday School in the near future. Another way we learn to understand scripture and to share our faith is through music. I was so surprised when I heard some folks were getting back together to form the Trinity Choir. Music helps us discern God's still small voice and help us clarify God's will for our lives through both the melody and the lyrics of the songs and hymns.

The more I read this scripture text this week the more I began to appreciate the many themes and layers it presents. God used Philip to change a man, who changed a country. The Holy Spirit, plus the Word, plus a willing servant equals great miracles glorifying God. What gifts do you have? What is the Holy Spirit leading us to do as a congregation? Have you felt God's spirit leading you? If asked, could you explain God's vision for your life, as you see it. Phillip heard from God not once but twice in this short story. First the angel of the Lord told him to take the road to Gaza. The Lords said. Go" and Phillip got up and went... I looked up where else in the Bible the word for go is used. I discovered to go is one of the most commonly used verbs in the Bible, used over 1,400 times! I'll just quote two... **Matthew 28:19:** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

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baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

And **Genesis 12:1**: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.’” I actually read several, not all 1400 verses where the verb go is used, but a good portion of them. I read enough to catch on to the usual pattern. It usually goes something like this... Someone is told to drop what they were doing and leave. Most of the time they aren’t told where they’re going or what they are to do once they get there. They’re just told to go and to trust God for more instructions to follow... It’s hard to do that... Get up and leave a place without the slightest idea of what lays ahead. In the Bible, that’s how God works. God works through people who trust enough to follow without knowing the outcome. God said to Phillip, get up and leave the land of Samaria and travel down that road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Folks that was a dangerous wilderness road. There was Phillip enjoying the fruits of his labor in Samaria where entire cities and towns had just converted to Christianity. Phillip must have been feeling pretty good about himself. He had been casting out demons and healing the sick. I mean my ego would burst at the seams if my preaching attracted even 10 new people, let alone entire towns and cities... I can’t imagine he would have been ready to move on... I mean to where do you want me to go God? What do you mean just take the road less traveled to

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Gaza? I'd be arguing with God that my place was with all those newly converted members who needed my guidance... Not so with Phillip. He is asked to go, and he gets up and goes... Once on the road, Phillip gets his second instruction from the Holy Spirit who points to the Ethiopian Eunuch attempting to decipher one of the hardest parts of the old testament. I mean if you're going to start out as a new Bible reader maybe you should ask your paster where to start. I think you might be directed to the birth of Jesus or the story of Moses being found in the bulrushes along the Nile River, or maybe even the entire book of Mark or perhaps the single verse of John 3:16. No one would recommend you to start with the 53rd chapter of the book of Isaiah! On the other hand, what a set up these verses are for entering into a conversation about Jesus Christ the long waited for Messiah...

It's too bad evangelism isn't this easy. First of all, you have to overcome yourself and recognize the opportunities God presents us with each and every day. Phillip could very easily have missed out on the most important encounter of his life, if he had decided he was much too important to his new congregations in Samaria. When Phillip baptized this Ethiopian Eunuch most scholars say he baptized the first gentile, the first non-Jew, to be converted to Christianity.

Tradition goes on to say when the Eunuch returned to his homeland, he became the founder of the Christian Church in Ethiopia. The Holy Spirit moved one man,

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Philip, to go and tell the Good News to another man. That event becomes the spark that ignites an entire nation. By the year 350 Christianity was the official religion of Ethiopia and today there are nearly 40,000 Christians in Ethiopia! One person can make a difference in the world. That person can be you.

May the Holy Spirit never stop speaking to and through us! May we have ears to hear when God's Holy Spirit speaks. When called, give us the courage to get up and go where the Spirit leads us. Through our obedience to the Spirit's leading, may God bring many blessings to our neighbors and much glory and honor to our Father in heaven. Amen.

Silence may be kept for meditation...

• **SPECIAL MUSIC**

Trinity Choir

* **NICENE CREED**

The Nicene Creed is said on all festivals and on Sundays in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The Apostles' Creed is said at other times. The Creed is omitted here if the service of Holy Baptism or another rite with a creed is used.

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

➤ *Or, He descended to the dead.*

* **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need...

A brief silence.

L: The word which came through your servant Philip spread to places far beyond his own world. May your Spirit's power also magnify our witness and extend it well past the limits of our own reach. God of truth,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Even when we draw boundaries of background, status or ability, you erase the borders between people with your radical message of love for all. Instill this passion for our brothers and sisters of every persuasion within us as well, so we might be more effective, faithful messengers of your gospel. God of truth,

C: Hear our prayer.

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L: You transformed the Ethiopian officer in the waters of baptism, and he was filled with your praises. Transform our hearts at the sight of your created world: the waters, fields, forests, and deserts, that we might be moved to protect them fiercely from the ravages of overdevelopment, pollution, and irresponsible harvesting of resources. God of truth,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We who seek to represent Christ cannot always see that it is our own hearts which need to be healed. Open us to see ourselves honestly, and transform our broken places with your Spirit's mercy. Attend to all who need your healing. Bring an end to this Covid Pandemic and heal our world. We especially raise before your throne of grace... .. God of truth,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Along with St. Mark, the evangelist and early church founders, we honor our ancestors in faith who paved the way for us to receive your Gospel message. We pray for the strength of their convictions in our own witness. God of truth,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

P: Incline your ear to our prayers and fill us with power to begin living out our faith, by the power of your Son our savior, Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

(The Sharing of the Peace that began when the congregation arrived is now shared with the Pastor at this time...)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

*** OFFERING PRAYER**

While the congregation is still standing say:

P: Instead of passing the offering plate, we ask you to please place your offering in the Offering Plates conveniently located on your way out of worship. For those worshipping with us from their vehicles, there is an offering basket located near the back door of the church and for those worshipping online if you go to www.pitsburgtlc.org you can make your offering online.

P: So, let's pray for the offerings we receive this day. O Lord, bless the gifts we offer, and guide us to the ones who need our witness of love, mercy, and good news. Open our hearts each moment to where we may best serve you, in Jesus' name.

C: Amen.

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* **THE LORD’S PRAYER**

P: Jesus is the “tie that Binds us together”, let us pray as Jesus taught...

C: 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.

• **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

* **SENDING BLESSING**

P: May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

* **SENDING HYMN “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” LBW 499**



1 Come, thou Fount of ev - 'ry bless-ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
2 Here I raise my Eb - en - e - zer: “Hith-er by thy help I’ve come”;
3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I’m con-strained to be;



streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.
and I hope, by thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.
let that grace now like a fet - ter bind my wan-d’ring heart to thee.



While the hope of end-less glo - ry fills my heart with joy and love,
Je - sus sought me when a strang - er, wan-d’ring from the fold of God;
Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love.



teach me ev - er to a - dore thee; may I still thy good-ness prove.
he, to res - cue me from dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.
Here’s my heart, oh, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

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*** DISMISSAL**

P: Until the next time we gather together as God’s people to offer our worship and praise, depart in Christ’s Love.

C: **Seeking, welcoming, and serving all. Amen!**

*** POSTLUDE**

“Just A Little Talk”

Roxanne Groff

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Trinity Worship Assistants and Staff

Ministers	All the People of Trinity
Organist	Roxanne Groff
Lector	Rob Arling
Greeter	Bev Erdmann
Parrish Nurse	PJ Musser
Custodian	Mark Groff
Secretary	Sharon Fourman
Facebook Live Recorder	PJ Musser
Altar Flowers	Given to the Glory of God by Dean & Donna Thompson

<p>Health Tips for the Week BODY: Have fish for dinner MIND: Smile and say Hi SPIRIT: Keep a notebook of your dreams</p>
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Scripture readings for next Sunday, May 2nd
Acts 15:1-18



Trinity is on the Air at FM 88.3

If you are near the Church on Sunday morning, you can tune in to FM 88.3 at 10:30 AM and hear the sermon from your car.

This Week @ Trinity – April 25 thru May 2, 2021

Sun, April 25

10:30 am Worship Service

Wed, April 28

6:30 pm Confirmation

Fri, April 30

3:30 pm FISH Choice Food Pantry

Sun, May 2

10:30 am Worship Service with Holy Communion

VACATION: Our Secretary will be on vacation through Wednesday, April 28 but in the office on Thursday and Friday April 29 and 30th.

Holy Communion Delivery Available to ALL:

If you or anyone you know would like to have Holy Communion delivered to a home or place of business, please call Pastor Mel at 937-626-7100. He will bring a prefilled communion chalice including both sanctified wine and a morsel of bread all prepackaged from the Concordia True Vine company. This is a safe way to stay connected to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Trinity Contact Info

Pastor:	Mel Musser
Email:	pastor@pitsburgtlc.org
Cell Phone:	937-626-7100
Secretary:	Sharon Fourman
Email:	secretary@pitsburgtlc.org
Office Hours:	By Appointment
Office Phone:	937-692-5670
Website:	www.pitsburgtlc.org

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