

**BULLETIN TEMPLATE: Minnesota Valley Church
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
Date: Sunday, May 24, 2026
Church Year Date: Memorial Day/Pentecost**

Thank you, dear musicians, for your dedication to leading us in the worship of our great Savior. Pastor Tom

Prelude: Rebekah Olson

Hymn #628 "God of Our Fathers"

Call to Worship: from Psalm 67

PASTOR: May God be gracious to us

ALL: And bless us and make his face shine upon us,

PASTOR: That your ways may be known on earth,

ALL: Your salvation among all nations.

PASTOR: May the peoples praise you, O God;

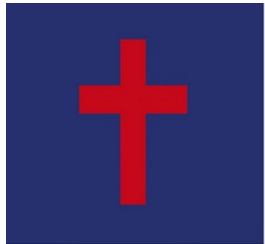
ALL: May all the peoples praise you.

PASTOR: May the nations be glad and sing for joy,

ALL: For you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.

PENTECOST Hymn #133 "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"

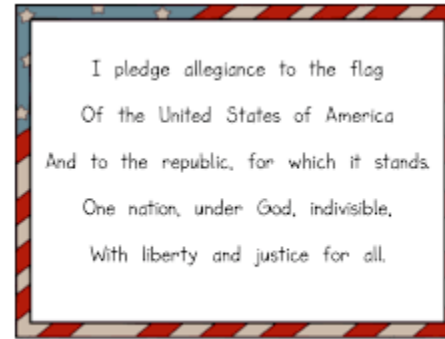
Pledge to Christian Flag:



**I pledge allegiance
to the Christian Flag
and to The Savior for
whose Kingdom it stands.
One Savior,
crucified, risen,
and coming again
with life and liberty to all who believe.**

Hymn #629 (vss 1&4) "The Star-Spangled Banner"

Pledge to American Flag:



Children's Sermon

Reader: Dave Fischer

Old Testament Lesson: *Numbers 11:24-30 So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. 26 However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. 27 A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." 28 Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" 29 But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" 30 Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.*

Epistle Lesson: *Acts 2:1-21 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who*

are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Reader: "Here ends the reading of God's Word"

Congregation Sings: "God be praised for His glad tidings."

Confession of Faith: ***John 3:16&17 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Amen"***

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Memorial Day Reminder and Prayer

Announcements & Prayer

Praise and Worship Songs: Hannah Carrizales

“AMERICA AND ISRAEL” John 7:37-39 Pastor Tom Olson, May 24, 2026

SEMINARY: Our Gospel text for this Pentecost/Memorial Day Sunday is John 7:37-39. In September of 1984 I moved to Plymouth, Minnesota to attend the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary. That same time a pastor of a home mission church in Lakeville, Minnesota, Pastor Ralph Tjelta, left Minnesota Valley and became the Old Testament instructor at the same seminary. He was also my homiletics professor.

SERMON: Each seminarian was given a text to use to prepare his first sermon. Guess what my text was, John 7:37-39! I begin and end my full-time ministry with the same text. I begin and end with the pulpit of the same preacher, Pastor Ralph Tjelta.

TOPIC: I preach from John 7 today under the theme of “America and Israel.” We honor all of our soldiers who have died on behalf of these two nations that are so deeply tied together. No two nations on earth have had greater opportunity to follow Christ than America and Israel.

ISRAEL: Jesus was a Jew, born in Israel, taught in Israel, was crucified in Israel, rose from the dead in Israel, ascended in Israel and according to the book of Zechariah which we recently studied, He is returning to the Mt. of Olives in Israel, perhaps soon. The church was born in Israel on this very day, Pentecost.

AMERICA: America was founded in large part by pilgrims seeking a land where they were free to worship God according to their understanding of the Bible. We have Bibles and opportunities to study them.

REJECTION: The gospel has been given to Israel and America and what has come of it? To a large degree, both nations have rejected Jesus. That is why we have so many problems today. America and Israel, the first issue is...

I. DEAD RELIGION

John 7:37a On the last and greatest day of the Feast,

CONTEXT: Israel had great religious fervor but they were spiritually dead. This last day of the feast included a prophetic act. They drew water from the pool of Siloam, had a procession to the altar in the temple, people shook reeds to make the sound of a mighty wind and then poured out that water.

RITUAL: Large crowds gathered for this ritual. It was a big deal to the people. But it was a dead ritual. They didn't know what it meant. They didn't know what it pointed toward. It was a visible prophecy of something to come. It was pointing to a water of life that would one day flow. It was a prophecy of a day when God would give living water that would flow from Jerusalem and quench the thirst of souls all over the world.

APATHETIC: The people loved the ceremony. They loved Jerusalem. They loved the temple. They loved being religious. But they didn't care about what it meant.

CHURCH: It can happen to us. We can love a religious tradition or practice. We can love a church building. When I grew up and said "I go to church" we didn't mean we were part of a congregation. We meant we met in a certain building. If I am correct, in some Christian traditions, even marriages are not considered official unless they are performed in a certain building led by a certain class of religious professionals.

TODAY: America and Israel still have a lot of religion but the question is this: "Is it dead or alive?" This is the question we each have to ask ourselves.

ANDREASEN: One of the churches in the town where I went to High School had a famous preacher named Jacob Andreasen. He wrote the book, "Lutherans and Conversion" which is about being religious vs. really born of the Spirit and truly converted to Christ. We used that book in Dr. Monseth's class in seminary. The church that Pastor Andreasen served was large with a pipe organ and giant stained-glass windows.

DEAD: They had the outward form of faith but Pastor Andreasen had little success in that church helping the people come to a living relationship with Jesus. They were very religious. But when he left that church and took a call in northern Minnesota, Pastor Andreasson, a bold preacher, quoted *Revelation 3:1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him*

who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. He fearlessly told the church that they had the reputation of being alive but they were dead.

WESTBY: Those words reverberated around Westby, Wisconsin for many years. That is how I heard them years later. Some heeded his preaching and got converted but most were happy to see him go so they could get a preacher that was not convicting and made them feel good about themselves.

America and Israel struggle with DEAD RELIGION. Secondly, we look at...

II. A LIVING ALTERNATIVE

John 7:37b-38 Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

SHOUT: Jesus invites them to the one the ceremony was pointing to. Right in the middle of this festival ritual as the priest was pouring out the water Jesus stepped in and shouted in a loud voice, ***"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."***

FORCE: Here He was. The Messiah. The one who could give them living water. The one who this event had pointed them to for hundreds of years. Yet they could not

see it. As we say, "It was there in plain sight." Jesus had to literally force his way into the crowd and shout to get their attention. But they didn't want living water. They wanted the ritual but not the fulfillment of its meaning.

QUESTION: If Jesus showed up today, in person, would we demand he follow our plans or would we let Him have his way? How about me. Who is in charge of my life? Myself or the Lord?

EBEN: When the Finnish Lutheran Church in a Michigan town decided to leave the liberal Lutheran Church in America they had a hard choice. They had a brand-new church building and parsonage they had just built and paid for. But in the LCA the synod claims ownership of all church property that is bought and paid for by the local congregation. It is an issue of power and control. If the congregation stayed and went along with heretical theology, they could keep their church and parsonage. If they left, they would have to pay the synod full price for the church and parsonage they had just got done building and paying for. They chose the Word of God and raised the money to pay for their facility a second time. They are standing on God's Word to this very day!

NIGERIA: That was easy compared to believers in Nigeria that are forced by the Muslims to choose between Jesus and death. Over 100,000 have chosen Jesus and have been put to death. Once you have tasted the living water of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the things of this world do not matter so much.

PETER: At one point, most people left Jesus when his preaching became strong. Jesus looked at his disciples and asked them if they were leaving too. I love Peter's response, *John 6:68 ... "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

SATISFIED: Jesus offers living water that no ritual can give. When Jesus came into my heart, my thirst was quenched, my search was over, my heart was satisfied and my mind was at peace. Jesus is the LIVING ALTERNATIVE to a merely dead religion. Thirdly... the great need in America and Israel today is this...

III. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

John 7:39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

PENTECOST: True faith is a living experience with the Holy Spirit. Hauge Lutherans call it "EXPERIENCED SALVATION." The Swedes in my first parish called it "COMING THROUGH." Today is Pentecost, the Sunday we remember two major events. The Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Pentecost and the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples on Pentecost. Pentecost is called the birthday of the church. That is why we sang the Pentecost hymn, "*Breath on Me Breath of God.*"

CONVERSION: When the Holy Spirit fills us, we move from dead head knowledge to a PERSONAL

EXPERIENCE with God. Salvation is no longer a doctrine floating around in our brain. It is a living experience of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

CHANGED: Jesus told the disciples that they needed to wait in Jerusalem after His ascension. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them. When the disciples got filled with the Holy Spirit they went from being a group of frightened men cowering in the upper room to a group of bold men who publicly proclaimed the good news of Jesus' salvation from Spain to India. They lost their fear. They were faithful unto death. The Word went forth with power that no human plans could ever duplicate. When the Spirit is saving souls and changing lives you don't need to advertise.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

REVIVAL: I believe in this. I am a revivalist. That is why I have promoted prayer meetings around the campfire on summer evenings. We pray before the church services every Sunday, and now on Saturday mornings once a month. I don't want to see what man can do to make a religious group with human effort. I want to see what God will do if we seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our church in our day.

William Booth made this powerful statement in the 1800's, he said: "The chief danger that confronts the

coming century will be religion without the Holy Spirit...”

MORA: When we earnestly seek the Lord and He sends the Holy Spirit in power to us, souls get saved, lives get changed, whole communities get transformed. My friend, Pastor Jim Johnson in Mora is experiencing a move of God in his church that came after his people began to earnestly pray. When He was dean of our Bible college, he had the professors get their noses out of their books and down on their faces at the chapel altar crying out to God for a move of the Holy Spirit. It made a big difference. Those were years of spiritual awakening.

CONTRAST: There are a lot of things you can do in religion without the Holy Spirit. You can build buildings, you can create programs, you can round up people, you can teach information. But you can't walk in the Pentecost power or see the salvation of lost souls without the Holy Spirit.

RESULT: The salvation of souls and the fruit of the Spirit only come when the Holy Spirit is working in your life. How can you identify the filling of the Holy Spirit? You will confess Jesus as Lord. You have a burden for lost souls. You will love the brethren. Your life will be filled with the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. You will be humble and not pushy.

FRUIT: We could have a packed church today with a record-breaking offering without the Holy Spirit. Jesus never said you will know them by their large crowds and

big budgets. Quite the opposite. The Apostle Paul was abandoned and alone after a life of Spirit-filled ministry. Jesus said, **“You will know them by their fruit.”** What is your experience today, DEAD RELIGION or a living PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of being filled with the Holy Spirit? Be honest. Are you striving in your own efforts or resting in the Lord?

APPLICATION: The big question for America, Israel, our church and each of us today is this: **“Are we led by the Holy Spirit or are we operating in our own strength?”** The quick check is a simple question: “Do I have the joy of salvation flowing out of my life.” Jesus said it this way, **“Streams of living water will flow from within...”**

Let's Pray: Dear Father, Send a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us to be witnesses for your salvation to our generation. We pray that America and Israel will return to Jesus and become beacons of righteousness and peace. Through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, one God, now and forever. Amen

Hymn #630 “America the Beautiful”

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Hymn “God Bless America” (with autoharp and children)

Postlude: Rebekah Olson