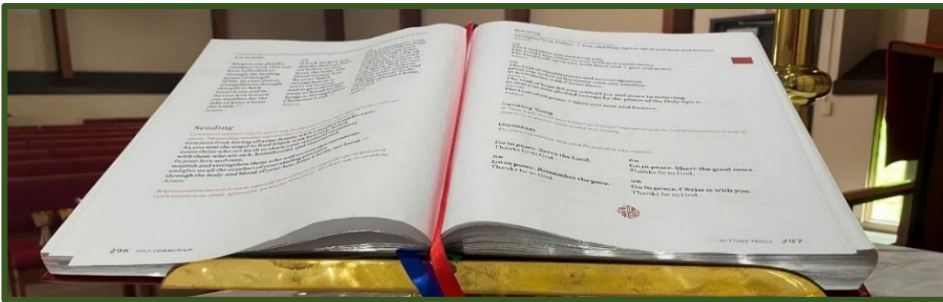


NEWS FROM ABIDING SAVIOR

June 2026



RECENT SERMONS

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[June 7th](#)

[June 14th](#)

[June 21st](#)

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PRAYER ROCKS-

PLEASE PRAY WITH US AND FOR US

If you didn't already get one, take a rock from the Narthex. Let it serve as a gentle reminder to lift this congregation in prayer—for vibrant ministry, its members, its leaders and its path forward in Christ. May the prayers be a blessing and bring strength, guidance, hope, and grace to all who are part of this faith community.

"The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

—James 5:16



Take a look at a picture of the portrait: Isenheim Altar Piece. It was painted in 1515 by Matthias Grunewald for the hospital Chapel of Saint Anthony's monastery in Alsace, France. The hospital provided care for persons with infectious diseases, especially those suffering with leprosy. I call our attention to the middle panel. Look to the lower-right. Do you see a man pointing to Jesus on the cross? That's John the Baptizer. On the back of that middle panel there are words in Latin: *He must become greater; I must become less.* (John 3: 30). You see, when it comes to our testimony about Jesus, it's not about us. For, we are called to point to Jesus and the new life that he brings. We are invited; you and me, to point to Jesus as our testimony: I must decrease and Jesus must increase.

It's not about you or me. Our reason for being as a congregation (Church of the Abiding Savior) is to point to Jesus and proclaim: *'Look, behold! Do you see him; Can you see him in our words and deeds?'* We are called in our baptism to be witnesses, to point to Jesus; And say to those wrestling with meaning and purpose in life: *'Come and see'*. It's not about me. It's not about you and it's not about blaming one another for our human frailties and our human faults. So, there's no finger pointing, unless we are pointing to Jesus; And the new life that he brings.

Please join me at worship on August 2nd as we hear the word proclaimed by Pastor Brenda Henry (Director for Evangelical Mission) and have a 'chew and chat' reflecting on "helpful hints in reaching – out to our service area" – after worship.

Pastor Carroll

COMING SOON - ANOTHER FIFTH SUNDAY DINNER

Many, many thanks to all who come out and serve at the shelter. August has 5 Sundays so Abiding Savior will be responsible for providing dinner to our brothers and sisters at Urban Ministries of Durham on August 30, 2026. Council member, Linda Warren will be responsible for planning. All are needed again. More information will be provided and shared in the upcoming weeks. Please don't hesitate to call Linda to volunteer or ask questions.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEETING

The Congregation Council meetings are typically held on the third Sunday of each month following worship service. Because of activities and conflicts, the July meeting has been moved to July 12th.

Abiding Savior is invited to participate in a Potluck Dinner and documentary viewing at St. Titus Episcopal Church on July 19, 2026. The documentary highlights the remarkable life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, a pioneering civil rights activist, attorney, scholar, poet, and Episcopal priest.

The **Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice** is a community organization dedicated to preserving and propagating the legacy of Pauli Murray (1910–1985), a trailblazing activist and advocate of African-American civil rights in the 20th century. It is located at the former **Pauli Murray Family Home** at 906 Carroll Street in Durham, North Carolina, the house where Murray was raised. In 2015, the property was named a national treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2016.

"When my brothers try to draw a circle to exclude me, I shall draw a larger circle to include them." Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray

ABIDING SAVIOR WAS AWARDED A MICHAEL PEELER GRANT

Abiding Savior has received a \$10,000 Michael Peeler Grant to create a video documentary of the congregation's history. A documentary entitled: "**ABIDE**" will listen to the voices of charter members telling the story of the founding of one of the three African descent congregations in the NC. Its central focus will be on legacy, endurance, and hope. The title **ABIDE** reflects the congregation's continued presence and endurance in the face of uncertainty.

Robert Levon (Bobby) Poole will be the filmmaker. Bobby operates the company RPC Media and has completed projects which span film, television, and digital media. His work has been showcased by several film festivals and aired on the Aspire Network.

NEW PARAMENTS



With grateful hearts, we give thanks to the Hester family for their generous gift of the beautiful green altar paraments, dedicated in loving memory of our dear member, Faye. May this meaningful gift be a lasting reminder of Faye's faithful witness and the love that continues to bless our congregation.

AFRICAN DESCENT LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION

Please consider joining the North Carolina chapter of the African Descent Lutheran Association (NC-ADLA) [Link to join.](#)

THRIVENT OPPORTUNITIES - GRANTS AND CHOICE DOLLARS!

Members of Thrivent Financial can recommend where some of Thrivent Financial's charitable outreach funds go by directing Choice Dollars. If you are a member, please consider directing your Choice Dollars to Abiding Savior. These Dollars accumulate in your account and are not automatically allocated. Your Choice Dollars can be designated online.

Members may also apply for community Action Grants to address needs in the community. These grants can help to fund congregational projects (examples: school supplies and 5th Sunday Meals at the Shelter). Each Thrivent member is eligible to receive up to two \$250 Thrivent Action Team Grants per year. If you need help or have questions, please contact Veronica Johnson.



This sermon was preached by Bishop Emily K. Hartner on Saturday, May 30, in Grace Chapel at the closing worship of the 2026 Synod Gathering of the North Carolina Synod, held at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC.

Our prayer for you for this 2026 Synod Gathering has been that you have witnessed and experienced what God has done—and is doing—across our synod and that God has revealed God’s grace through all of it. As we come to our closing worship service this afternoon, it feels natural that we should focus on the “Go and tell” piece of the theme.

It makes me think of Julius Caesar. “I came, I saw....and, no, I didn’t conquer, but I was sent forth to proclaim the good news of Christ.”

The Gospel reading ([Matthew 28:16-20 NRSVue](#)) for this service is the assigned reading for tomorrow, Holy Trinity Sunday, but it’s not a bad option for a service of sending (*Go and tell!*), as it is commonly referred to as the Great Commission—Jesus’ great sending of his disciples. “Go therefore...,” he instructs them.

Again, not a bad reading for a theme of *Come and see; go and tell*.

The Great Commission. “Great,” meaning significant, massive, important. And “commission,” from *co*, meaning together, and *mission*, meaning a sending for a specific task or duty. A sending together. A shared task.

A little later in this service, we will commission our newest synod lay preachers. We will send them, together as a group, but also with the rest of the church, to proclaim the good news of salvation and reconciliation, boldly, with wisdom and patience and with love and faithfulness. A sending together. A shared task. I think they will be relieved to know that they don’t go alone. Right? (*directed to the lay preachers*)

When I think of being commissioned to do something, my mind wanders back to my first call and a youth mission trip to the mountains of West Virginia. Our youth group had joined a larger group of youth from across the country for a week doing various projects. We were divided into groups and sent to various sites.

On the first day, the van dropped my group off—maybe seven youth and two chaperones—at a home that needed a new set of steps with a small landing, leading up to the front door. We got out of the van and found, waiting for us, a pile of lumber and two stair stringers.

This is when you’re supposed to say, “What else, Bishop Emily? What other supplies did they leave for you? What instructions?”

Ha! Well, that was about it, though there was a set of instructions that, eventually, the resident goat decided to eat. The youth entertained themselves for a while as I sat down on top of all that lumber, trying to make sense of these instructions with no prior experience in building...well, anything. Even my IKEA furniture builds always ended up with a few too many extra parts.

I couldn’t believe that they expected me to lead this group of youth in building a set of stairs. I could make no sense of the instructions or the pieces of wood they left for me. And that van was long gone. And eventually, like I said, the goat ate the instructions. There was nothing I could do but sit there and wait. I knew that if I attempted to start this project myself, it was going to end poorly, and somebody was most definitely going to get hurt. So I just sat there along with the rest of the group, hoping for one of the people really in charge to show up so that I could explain how inadequately qualified we were for this job. Maybe they would reassign us to something I knew how to do, like painting.

After a while, the van came back, and another work group filed out of the car, along with that group’s adult chaperones. Imagine my relief when, after assessing the situation, I discovered that one of the other chaperones was a licensed contractor.

Pretty soon, he got us going, giving us instructions about what boards needed to be cut, which needed to be nailed together, and, believe it or not, by the end of the week, we had built a reliable set of stairs. But, not only could one person not have completed that task alone, not even one group could have done it alone. It wasn’t until someone showed up with the skills the rest of us lacked that we could actually complete, together, the mission. It was, in the fullest sense of the word, a *co-mission*. A shared task. A sending together.

This mission trip experience aside, there was a time in my life when I was uncomfortable with shared tasks. I didn't like the feeling of inadequacy. I felt like, to prove my worth, I really needed to do everything on my own. I didn't like group projects in school. It either felt like I was cheating, by not doing the whole thing myself, or like I was compromising by trusting other people to do something perhaps not quite to my standards.

And then my husband had spinal surgery. Two weeks before we would bring home a baby to adopt without any advanced notice. I remember sitting in my husband's hospital room as he recovered from surgery, trying to take care of him *and* frantically creating some semblance of a baby registry.

It's probably not a coincidence that while I was in the waiting room during my husband's surgery, I looked down at my feet and was literally wearing two different shoes. Clearly, I could not do it all by myself.

I remember the nerve it took to call my neighbor to ask, "Would you mind going over to my house and just switching the laundry from the washer to the dryer?" Of course, she didn't mind, and when I got home that night, not only had all the laundry been washed, dried, and neatly folded, but the dishes in the sink had also been washed, dried, and put away.

That, too—caring for my husband and preparing for a baby—turned out to be a great co-mission. A shared task. A sending together.

This Great Commissioning text is used for Holy Trinity Sunday, presumably because it's one of the few places in the Bible that mentions all three persons of the Holy Trinity:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age. (Matthew 28: 19-20 NRSVue)

It's always so tempting to try to explain away the Holy Trinity on this Sunday. The Trinity is like this or like that. But you all know that any attempt to explain it fails in the end.

So instead of trying to figure it all out, I wonder if it's not enough to recognize that not even God undertakes the divine work alone. Three in one; one in three. Intrinsic to God's very nature is a co-mission—a shared task.

And perhaps if we are created in the image of God, then we, too, are created to do this work to which we are called together, in community with one another. Perhaps we're actually supposed to ask for something when we have a need, and to offer something when we have an abundance. Perhaps we are not supposed to feel threatened by the gifts of one another, but rather to feel grateful that someone can do what we cannot and that we can do what they cannot. Perhaps we are supposed to share the task to which we are called and the mission for which we are sent.

If we try to go it alone, we won't get very far; we won't have what we need. But when we recognize that we are co-missioned, that we are tasked with collaboration, we will have everything that we need.

We do not have to do this work alone. In fact, I am convinced that we are not supposed to do it alone. We have one another. And we have God, who promised also to be with us all the way to the end of the age.

Amen.



Walking with you



THIS CHURCH STILL HAS FIRE

Not all memories come flooding back because of photographs. Sometimes they can be a song, a word or phrase, or even a smell. For me, it's barbecue. One whiff and, in an instant, I'm transported back to my youthful summers with barbecues across the street in the park, with sights of fellowship, family reunions and church gatherings. That smell has a way of lingering. It settles into your clothes, into your skin. Even after the fire has died down, it stays with you. Fire does that often. It marks you, sticking with you longer than you expect.

I remember a story about a matriarch, simply known as Auntie. She considered herself a barbecue grill master. One day, the family gathered at her home for a summer holiday. As always, additional guests and food arrived after Auntie retired for the day. A family member thought he might help. He lifted the lid of the grill and noticed that nothing was cooking and the charcoals were dead. He went inside and prepared the meat and came back out with charcoal, lighter fluid and matches. And like that, Auntie suddenly appeared.

"What's going on?" she asked.

He explained the situation and his desire to help.

Auntie didn't do any more talking. She raised her hands, lowered her face into the grill and breathed into the coals. Poof, embers glowed again.

She said, "Still got fire."

We just came through the Easter season, having celebrated Pentecost a short time ago. I see Pentecost not as a polite holy day but one just as important as Christmas and Easter. The Spirit isn't arriving on a quiet night or shouting "Alleluia." Instead, we read that the Spirit arrives like a violent wind, resting tongues of fire on the disciples. It's a day when everything changes.

Here is the good news: the Spirit isn't wrong. This church still has fire. Lay leaders still have fire. Rostered ministers still have fire. Congregations still have fire. Synods still have fire. And the churchwide organization still has fire. Pentecost isn't a spectacle, it's a transformation. It's when the disciples, men and women alike, become bold witnesses, when the church is born—not as an institution but as a movement. The Spirit sets these people out on a new calling, grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I imagine that wherever the disciples traveled after that day, the memories came back whenever they felt a strong wind or met up with people around a tall fire. They felt it whenever they were afraid or uncertain. And, just like that day when the Spirit first arrived, they remembered that God breathed into them a new life, constantly renewing their calling and leading them to act boldly. They lived out Jesus' call. They fed the hungry, housed those who needed a place to sleep, clothed the poor, bringing peace where peace seemed impossible.

That calling hasn't diminished, even if it feels harder to hear, especially as phrases like "post-Christian" grow in popularity, implying we can keep the values of Christ without Jesus himself. The church where the Spirit flew in to breathe new life is replaced by a movement that dismisses empathy as weak, where disagreements are hardened into threats, and peace feels naïve.

Sometimes, even in this church, we can feel like the coals have gone cold. But Jesus' call to the disciples is the same call he has for us today: "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Jesus is telling us to care for the world. Live in right relationship with God and one another. Not through swords or bombs, not through dictates and orders, but through love and compassion.

When I go back several verses in that same chapter, I see the Beatitudes, God's invitation to grace and love. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peacemakers. I read these words and I can almost see the Spirit leaning into the grill, breathing into what we thought was finished, and saying, "Still got fire."

And here is the good news: the Spirit isn't wrong. This church still has fire. Lay leaders still have fire. Rostered ministers still have fire. Congregations still have fire. Synods still have fire. And the churchwide organization still has fire.

Yes, we're going to make mistakes, and I will make mistakes, but we still have that fire burning inside us to be the peacemakers in a world desperate for peace.

June 23, 2026

ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE

America at 250: Holding gratitude and humility

Dear church,

As we look toward the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, many of us will celebrate with fireworks, parades and barbecues. Independence Day often brings us together with family and friends. Yet there is more that connects us than our communal celebrations. We are also connected through a common vision.

Signed in 1776, the Declaration of Independence proclaims a vision of equality for all people. While there were other nations pushing for equality at the time, the declaration was and is a monumental document in the way it names the aspiration so boldly. As we observe and celebrate the 250th anniversary of that signing, we also affirm the vision of freedom and equality it casts. We can be grateful.

And with contrition and humility, we acknowledge all the ways we have failed to embody that vision. As members of this church, we are called to “pray, participate in, and advocate for civic life in the United States that reflects God’s activity and call, which seek both the well-being of all people and a creation marked by justice and peace” (ELCA social statement [*Faith and Civic Life*](#), p. 89).

As Lutherans, we know the importance of naming realities for what they are. As citizens, we confess the ways we have not yet realized the vision of the Declaration of Independence and, more importantly, as Christians we confess the ways we have participated in or been complicit in failures to live into the vision God provides. This vision is rooted in creation and redemption. God crafts each person in God’s own image and sends Jesus Christ to redeem us, setting us free to follow Christ’s new commandment to love one another.

The history of the United States is complex, and all too often we have fallen short of our stated values. Indigenous peoples across this land have been forced to cede their ancestral homes and pushed to reservations. Women and men have been prevented from voting because of their sex and race and spat on and jailed when they demanded their rights. Japanese American families were interned during World War II. Queer and transgender people’s lives are obstructed by federal and state orders.

There is a photograph of Elizabeth Eckford, one of the nine Black teenagers who integrated Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., in 1957. Books under her arm, she faces forward as angry white people crowd behind her. She was just trying to go to school.

Holding both the failures and the vision in our hearts and minds, I invite us to ask ourselves, “What does it mean to celebrate a promise that is real and yet still unfolding? What does it mean to be a people who always live in ‘the already but not yet’?”

This is a central question for us not only as we mark the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence but also in our daily lives as people of faith. The prophets repeatedly remind us of the vision God casts for all of creation, and they call us to account when, as God’s own people, we fall short.

When we fall short, we remember we are rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We think, speak and live out faith through God’s future. God’s future is resurrection. As a church, we are turned not only to the past but to the future God is making possible right now through us as we love and serve others.

As Lutheran Christians, we believe that God calls us to:

- Remember our connection to each other through baptism, as Scripture teaches us: “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another” (Romans 12:5).
- Name sin for what it really is and to repent of it, as the Augsburg Confession and the catechisms remind us.
- Serve the common good in society as “earthly measures toward God’s intention” ([*Faith and Civic Life*](#), p. 11).

As we celebrate 250 years of the Declaration of Independence, we can hold gratitude and humility, possibilities and shortcomings. We continue to live in the already and the not-yet.

And we hold fast to the most important promise of all: the presence of God with us, the power of the resurrection of Christ, the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit and the ever-unfolding grace of God.

We celebrate this occasion neither as a perfect nation nor as a perfect church but as a people held in God’s grace and called into community in service to all neighbors and for the sake of the world God so loves.

In Christ,



The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Thanks to all who volunteered to make the meal at Urban Ministries of Durham possible. With a Thrivent Community Action Team grant (from the Weathers' family), donations, many sauce makers and many, many hands to serve, we provided our siblings with a delicious spaghetti dinner!

