

# *More Days for Praise*

FESTIVALS AND COMMEMORATIONS IN  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP



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## The Lesser Festivals and Commemorations in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

For millennia human societies have constructed calendars. An annual pattern in which some days of the year are highly festive, other days are somewhat significant, while most days are rather ordinary provides a wholesome rhythm to communal life. The world's religions maintain such calendars, suggesting days to celebrate and persons to commemorate. *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) provides one such calendar that has three different types of dates to keep.

First are the principal festivals. Christians meet each Sunday to celebrate Christ's resurrection. Some of these Sundays are particularly celebrative, but some of the principal festivals do not fall on a Sunday. Lutherans join with many other Christians to designate the following as our principal festivals: the Nativity of Our Lord, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, the days of Holy Week, the Three Days, all the Sundays of Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, and Christ the King. These principal festivals are listed in ELW, page 14. Commentary about these principal festivals is found in *Keeping Time: The Church's Years* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), pages 63–130.

Next come the lesser festivals. The twenty-eight lesser festivals celebrate occasions in the life of Jesus, such as the Annunciation of Our Lord (March 25, nine months before Christmas), and days on which to praise God for the lives of the apostles, such as Mary Magdalene (July 22), and the evangelists, such as Luke (October 18). The lesser festivals are listed in small capital letters on the ELW calendar, pages 15–17. Guidelines for when they might replace or supplement Sunday celebrations are in the *ELW Leaders Edition*, pages 12–13. To enhance our worship on both the principal and the lesser festivals, ELW, on pages 18–59, provides readings and a prayer proper to each day. For some dates, the collection of hymns includes an especially appropriate song of praise (see, for example, ELW hymns 416–432).

In third place are the commemorations. The ELW calendar provides an annual list of ninety-five commemoration dates. These days illumine various aspects of the church's life and mission by attending to the lives of women and men who have followed Christ in succeeding generations. An essay discussing both the lesser festivals and the commemorations, written by Mons Teig, is

available as chapter 4 of *Keeping Time*, pages 131–140, and brief descriptions of those who are commemorated are found in that volume on pages 197–242 and online at Augsburg Fortress’s lectionary website, [www.sundaysandseasons.com](http://www.sundaysandseasons.com).

Most members of our churches do not have access to this explanatory volume or to online calendar helps. One reason why it is a blessing for every worshiper to have an *ELW* in hand during worship is so that all the baptized can be encouraged to become familiar with this calendar, checking pages 15–17 each Sunday, and then being able to dedicate some minutes throughout the week in thanks to God for the life of Christ and the witness of these remarkable believers. Sunday is indeed the primary day for Christian thanksgiving, the baptized gathering around word and sacrament to praise Christ’s resurrection and receive the power of the Spirit. But this calendar provides us with “more days for praise,” about one day in three either marking an occasion in the life of Jesus Christ or commemorating one of the believers, and on these days we can offer thanks to God for mercies then and now. As well, the accomplishments of many of these persons inspire us to add an appropriate petition to our daily prayer, so that our devotion can carry on the ministry of these deceased Christians. As the illustration on the cover of this volume (borrowed from *ELW*, page 11) indicates, the life of Christ is the center of our entire year, the four seasons and each day and night illumined by the light of the resurrection. Observing the lesser festivals and the commemorations is one way to celebrate Christ as the center of the entire year.

Some Christian denominations provide precise requirements about those who can be honored as “saints.” Especially during past centuries, the saints’ days were central to even many secular calendars. Relics of the saints were believed to radiate divine power, and many Christians attested to miracles, especially healings, that followed upon prayer to these revered dead. In reaction against these practices, other churches avoid mention of “saints” altogether, except as a way to describe all the baptized, and no days except Sunday are deemed important. The Pilgrims of Massachusetts colony even outlawed the celebration of Christmas as being nothing but an occasion for excessive partying.

The Lutheran tradition has occupied a middle position. In the New Testament, the Greek term we translate into English with the noun “saint” is used to describe all the baptized. “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints,” begins Paul’s letter to the Romans. So it is that many Lutheran churches refer to all their members as saints. In our prayer to God, we are invited to give praise for all the baptized, who are signs of God’s grace and inspiration for the life of faith.

The saints are to be remembered so that we may strengthen our faith when we see how they experienced grace and how they

were helped by faith. —*Augsburg Confession* (commemorated on June 25)

Yet the saints are not only among the living. The baptized who are among the dead shine over the centuries, and we see their light coming from the distant past, just as in our night sky we see light that began shining out from stars eons ago. Lutherans are asked to refrain from praying to the dead, since the dead rest in God and have no power to save. But since the first century, Christians have commemorated the faith and life of their honored dead. We read an early example of this pattern in Luke's narrative in Acts 7 describing the martyrdom of the deacon Stephen, and Lutherans have maintained this biblical practice of remembering the saintly dead.

Saints are people who, as the salt of the earth, have helped to preserve the world from decay. Saints are people who radiate the divine light for themselves and for others. Saints are people who by their being, their life, and their deeds show that God lives. They shine through the ages. They illumine our lives, for the light which bursts out of them reflects the power of God and the glory of Jesus. —Swedish theologian and social activist Nathan Söderblom (commemorated on July 12) [Charles J. Curtis, *Nathan Söderblom: Theologian of Revelation* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1966), 66.]

These women and men are fascinating folk: lay and clergy, poor and rich, some who resided in historic Christian locales and others in new mission fields, martyrs, theologians, monks, nuns, scholars, authors, artists. These persons developed doctrine and renewed the church and improved society and nursed the sick. Some were royalty and others were servants, some very like us and some surprisingly different from us. Some lived exemplary lives in a hut, and others traveled the globe adapting to totally new situations. The theologian Thomas Aquinas (January 28) labored to reason out how Christians could bridge doctrine and secular philosophy, and Perpetua and her companions (March 7) were executed for disobeying the emperor and dismissing familial obligations. Of some of these persons, such as Jerome (September 30) or Teresa of Ávila (October 15), we can consult lengthy biographies that narrate the details of their lives and reprint their writings. About some, such as the apostle Bartholomew (August 24), we know virtually nothing, and of a few, for example Henry, Bishop of Uppsala (January 19), the church relies solely on legendary stories.

The date the church uses for commemorations is usually the person's death date, the date on which she or he was born to eternal life. Indeed, in antiquity



many people did not know what their birth date was. Perhaps especially in our time and culture, it is good to reflect not only on the life of these Christians, but also on their death. We now join them in living, and will someday join them in dying. But then there is God, and yet more days for praise. As the hymn “Thine the amen” (ELW 826) by Herbert Brokering, says it,

Thine the glory in the night  
no more dying only light  
thine the river thine the tree  
then the Lamb eternally  
then the holy holy holy celebration jubilee  
thine the splendor  
thine the brightness  
only thee only thee.

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## Using this Worship Guidebook

It is the intention of *More Days for Praise* to provide concise information about the lesser festivals and the commemorations cited in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW). April 22, Day of Creation, as designated in *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), has been added to the ELW list.

The hope is that this guidebook will encourage users of ELW to keep the lesser festivals and commemorations in many and various ways. The entries provide bullet points, information, and commentary different from what is available in *Keeping Time: The Church's Years* and on the Augsburg Fortress's lectionary website, yet far less than is available in many biographical resources. The design has sought an easily accessible format to allow for quick reference, with an amount and level of data that are ideal for busy clergy and laity and serve as a review of what was in church history courses and a source of information about believers from the recent past. Some scholarly terms are briefly defined, and contemporary place names are added in parentheses to many historical but perhaps now obsolete geographical references.

The entries in this guidebook include: (1) an image, whether a photograph or a portrait or a wall painting or stained-glass window from a church; (2) a concise chronological list of relevant life dates; (3) a short paragraph describing why that person is honored in the present; (4) sometimes, a comment about how the saint has been depicted in art; (5) a quotation, usually from the person being commemorated; (6) a hymn appropriate to the day, and the reason why that hymn was chosen; (7) one suggestion for the day's praise to God; (8) a prayer from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (pages 18–63, 72–87) especially appropriate to the day; and (9) two petitions suggested by the lesser festival or commemoration. Over the course of the year, the petitions cite geographical locations and Christian denominations that have been suggested by the life stories of those who are commemorated. Although most novels and commercial films that deal with saints are not historically accurate or religiously trustworthy, occasionally an acceptable novel or movie has been noted.

*More Days for Praise* has attempted both to honor the traditions of the church and to attend to historical data, although it was not always easy to meet this dual purpose. This guidebook has sought information from a wide range of sources, including *Keeping Time: The Church's Years*, pages 197–242; Philip H. Pfatteicher's *New Book of Festivals and Commemorations: A Proposed Common Calendar of Saints* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); John J. Delaney's *Dictionary*

of *Saints* (New York: Doubleday, 1980); and other collections of the lives of the saints. Standard sources of information, for example Wikipedia and Christian encyclopedias, were also consulted. Since some of these sources provide far more detail than does this guidebook, interested people are encouraged to check these longer accounts. However, it is often the case that such historical reference books disagree about biographical details, and when a death date is debatable, this guidebook uses the date given in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Note that in some listings, countries such as Germany or Italy are listed for clarity even though they did not yet exist as nations at that date.

Not surprisingly, about those persons of whom least is known, legends have grown up to fill the vacuum, and many of these tales are well-known and beloved. Some popular books of saints' lives include much that is fantastical, and the scholarly tome by Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) traces the practices of saint veneration that were central to Christian devotion before the modern era. In *More Days for Praise*, little space has been given to legendary material.

*More Days for Praise* was developed with three different uses in mind. The first is home devotions. Some Christians, as individuals or as families, pray daily, usually at meals. If this guidebook is handy, many days of the year can be illumined by the light of Christ and of those who have gone before us in the faith. The short paragraph (3 above) can be read aloud, the hymn sung, and the home prayers enriched by the suggestions of praise, prayer, and petition.

The second use is congregational gatherings of all kinds. Local church calendars are marked by weekly Bible studies, choir rehearsals, committee meetings, parish suppers, work days, and entertainment events, and each of these gatherings can begin with a devotion that holds the Christian past in the present. As with home prayer, the short paragraph (3) can be read aloud, the hymn sung, and the event enriched by the suggestions of praise, prayer, and petition. In this way, the calendars of local assemblies can achieve wider significance by meshing with the calendar of the whole church and prior centuries.

The third use is Sunday worship. When one of the lesser festivals falls on a Sunday, both the lectionary's prayer of the day and that of the lesser festival can be included, and the suggestions for a hymn and for petitions inform the Sunday selections for song and intercessions. When a commemoration falls on a Sunday, the service folder can include several informative sentences, the suggested hymn can be sung, the explanation as to why that hymn is appropriate can be cited in the folder, and the petitions can influence the weekly intercessions. Perhaps an image of the saint can be projected onto one of the nave's

walls, in this way the dead joining with our living, gathering around the throne of God.

In the future, it is likely that Lutherans will refine the list of deceased Christians they commemorate. All Saints Day (November 1) is the date already on our calendar as the time to commemorate all the nameless faithful who have lived and died in baptismal promise. But throughout the year, local assemblies can feel free to add a commemoration of a person who has been especially beloved or whose Christian witness has been extraordinary. Christians have often spoken of “so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1) that surrounds us, and that cloud, marking the presence of the Holy Spirit, will shower us with yet more days to praise in years to come.

## Presentation of Our Lord



*Presentation of Jesus in the Temple from Menologion of Basil II, 11th century illuminated manuscript.*

For centuries, the Western church has celebrated the presentation of Jesus in the temple on February 2, the fortieth day after Christmas. In Luke's account (2:22-40), two ancient Jewish rituals are combined: the mother is cleansed from the blood of childbirth, and the firstborn son is redeemed from infant sacrifice. On this day Christians remember Christ's cleansing of all people and his death in our stead. This day is also called Candlemas, because of the tradition that on this day the year's candles are blessed.

Artistic depictions of this story usually include some representation of the temple, Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus, along with Simeon and Anna. Sometimes Joseph is carrying the two turtle doves for the substitute sacrifice.



My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

—Simeon, in Luke 2:30-32

## ON FEBRUARY 2

**Sing** a version of Simeon's song, traditionally called the *Nunc dimittis* (ELW 313, p. 113, or p. 135).

**Praise God** for bringing us to Christ, who is our temple.

### **Pray the prayer for Presentation of Our Lord**

Almighty and ever-living God, your only-begotten Son was presented this day in the temple. May we be presented to you with clean and pure hearts by the same Jesus Christ, our great high priest, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW, p. 55)

**Pray** for God's light to illumine the darkness of the world.

**Pray** for aged Christians, especially those who are no longer able to attend worship.

## Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, renewers of society

### HARRIET TUBMAN

- 1822 born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland  
led thirteen rescue missions, guiding about 300 escaped slaves to freedom
- 1844 began married life
- 1861 began serving the Union in several capacities during the Civil War
- 1890 began support of the women's suffrage movement
- 1918 died in Auburn, New York (March 10)



Having been severely beaten while enslaved, Harriet Tubman, a descendant from the Ashanti tribe in Africa, suffered seizures her whole life. Yet through the Underground Railroad she led enslaved



Harriet Tubman, 1895.

people to freedom, and she served as a nurse and a spy for the northern army. In her later years, she became a devout member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She always believed that God had called her to engage in tasks of liberation.



Long ago when the Lord told me to go free my people I said, “No, Lord! I can’t go. Don’t ask me.” But He came another time, and I said again, “Lord, go away. Get some better-educated person. Get a person with more culture than I have.” But He came back a third time, and spoke to me just as He did to Moses. He said, “Harriet, I want you.” And I knew then I must do what He bid me to do.

—Harriet Tubman

## SOJOURNER TRUTH

- c. 1797 born into slavery in Swatekill, New York, named Isabella Baumfree
- c. 1815 began married life, bore five children
- 1826 escaped from slavery
- 1843 took the name Sojourner Truth
- 1850s traveled extensively as a public speaker for abolition and women’s rights
- 1883 died in Battle Creek, Michigan (November 26)



Sojourner Truth, c. 1870.

Sojourner Truth is famous for having delivered the speech “Ain’t I a Woman,” a talk that was widely circulated in a later literary form.

For nearly a century she worked to free slaves and then women from their bondage. From 1829 she was an active church member, notably among the



Seventh Day Adventists, working within various Christian communities for social reforms.



When I left the house of bondage I left everything behind. I wasn't going to keep nothing of Egypt on me, an' so I went to the Lord an' asked him to give me a new name. And the Lord gave me Sojourner because I was to travel up and down the land showing the people their sins and bein' a sign unto them. I told the Lord I wanted two names 'cause everybody else had two, and the Lord gave me Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people.

—Sojourner Truth

## ON MARCH 10

**Sing** “I want Jesus to walk with me” (ELW 325), an African American spiritual that can remind us of the dangerous walks taken by the abolitionists. The tune is named after Sojourner Truth.

**Praise God** for all who in past and present dedicate their lives to liberating the oppressed.

### **Pray for social justice**

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW, p. 79)

**Pray** for refugees and for those who provide for their needs.

**Pray** for the African Methodist Episcopal Church and for the Seventh-Day Adventists.

## Julian of Norwich, renewer of the church

- 1372 born in Norfolk, England
- 1402 experienced visions of Christ while deathly ill (May 8)
- became an anchoress living in a cell at St. Julian's church in Norwich
- served as pastoral counselor and teacher from her cell
- wrote *Revelations of Divine Love*, an explication of her visions
- c. 1416 died in Norwich, England

We know little about Julian, not even her given name. She is renowned for her unique theological writings, in which the triune God is always merciful and universally loving, thanks to the passion of Christ. In a time of social chaos and plague, Julian, the earliest known female author writing in English, wrote, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." Recently her description of Christ as our mother became popular. Her commemoration is kept on the date of her visions.



Statue of Julian of Norwich at Norwich Cathedral, England.



As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother. Our Father willeth, our Mother worketh, our good Lord the Holy Ghost confirmeth. God willed that the second Person should become our Mother, our Brother, and our Savior. Jesus is our true Mother in kind. The mother's service is nearest, readiest and surest. The mother can

give her child to suck of her milk. But our Mother Jesus, he can feed us with himself, and doth, full courteously and tenderly, with the Blessed Sacrament, that is the precious food of true life. This fair lovely word “Mother,” it is so sweet and so kind in itself, that it cannot truly be said to any nor of any, but to him and of him who is very Mother of life and of all. To the property of Motherhood belongeth kind love, wisdom, and knowing; and it is God.

—Julian of Norwich

## ON MAY 8

**Sing** a hymn written by Jean Janzen that was inspired by Julian’s writings, “Mothering God, you gave me birth” (ELW 735).

**Praise God** for giving us creative theologians who offer us new ways to see God.

### **Pray a prayer taken from the writings of Julian of Norwich**

In you, Father all-mighty, we have our preservation and our bliss. In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you, our Lord the Holy Spirit, is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen. (ELW, p. 87)

**Pray** for orphans and for all those who have no loving relationship with their mother.

**Pray** for everyone who lives alone.

## James, Apostle

The apostle James the Greater is identified as a fisherman, the son of Zebedee and Salome and the brother of the disciple John. He, Peter, and John constituted an inner circle of Jesus' disciples. According to Acts 12:1-2, he was the first of the Twelve to be martyred. One Spanish form of his name is Iago, thus Santiago names a city on the Spanish coast taken to be the burial place of St. James. Since the ninth century, pilgrims walk across Europe the "way of St. James" to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, to revere his memory.

In art, James is usually pictured with the scallop shell of the Spanish sea coast that was the goal of pilgrimages. A Crusader legend connects him with Spanish military battles against the Muslims, thus depicting James "the Moor-slayer" as a warrior on horseback, and the "St. James's cross" draws its vertical pole as a sword.



James the Apostle



Jesus went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James. . . .

—Mark 3:13-16

## ON JULY 25

**Sing** “By all your saints” (ELW 421), stanzas 1, 17, and last. Stanza 17 speaks of James. An alternative is “The church of Christ, in every age” (ELW 729), a hymn that describes the mission of the church James helped to establish.

**Praise God** for those pilgrimage sites where Christians have found spiritual renewal.

### **Pray the prayer for the day of the apostle James**

Gracious God, we remember before you today your servant and apostle James, the first among the twelve to be martyred for the name of Jesus Christ. Pour out on the leaders of your church that spirit of self-denying service which is the true mark of authority among your people, through Jesus Christ our servant, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELW, p. 57)

**Pray** for the church in Spain.

**Pray** for the willingness to serve God wherever we find ourselves.

**Eat** scallops for dinner.

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