



54th Year
2024–2025

BACH

Cantata Vespers



**Grace Lutheran Church
River Forest, Illinois**

**Sunday afternoons
Lecture at 3:00 p.m.
Prelude at 3:45 p.m.**

May 18, 2025

Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein

On Christ's Ascension into heaven alone

Welcome to Grace Lutheran Church

We are glad that you have joined us for this afternoon's Bach Cantata Vespers.

Today's service is also available on the [Bach Cantata Vespers YouTube Channel](#).

For those who have trouble hearing, sound enhancement units are available in the back of the church and may be obtained from an usher.

Please silence all cell phones and pagers.

Recording or photography of any kind during the service is strictly forbidden.

We ask that you kindly refrain from applause during this service of worship.

☐ Joy-ous light of glo - ry: ☑ of the im - mor - tal Fa - ther;

heav - en - ly, ho - ly, bless - ed Je - sus Christ.

We have come to the set-ting of the sun, and we look to the eve-ning light.

We sing to God, the Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Spir - it: You are wor-thy of

be - ing praised with pure voic - es for - ev - er. O Son of God,

O Giv - er of life: The u - ni - verse pro - claims your glo - ry.

☐ The Lord be with you. ☑ And al - so with you.

☐ Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. ☑ It is right to give him thanks and praise.

☐ Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who led your people

Israel by a pil - lar of cloud by day and a pil - lar of fire by night:

Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may his Word be a lamp
to our feet and a light to our path; for you are mer - ci - ful,
and you love your whole cre - a - tion, and we, your crea - tures, glo - ri - fy you,
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it. **☐ A - men**

✝ PSALMODY ✝

We sit.

PSALM 141

*Women sing parts marked **I**. Men sing parts marked **II**. All sing parts marked **☐**.*

☐ Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;
the lift - ing up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice.
I O Lord, I call to you; come to me quick - ly; hear my voice when I cry to you.
II Let my prayer rise be - fore you as in - cense;
the lift - ing up of my hands as the eve - ning sac - ri - fice.



I Set a watch be-fore my mouth, O Lord, and guard the door of my lips.



II Let not my heart in-cline to an-y e-vil thing; let me not be oc-cu-



pied in wick-ed-ness with e-vil-do-ers. I But my eyes are



turned to you, Lord God; in you I take ref-uge. Strip me not of my life.



II Glo-ry to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho-ly Spir-it;



I as it was in the be-gin-ning, is now, and will be for-ev-er. A-men.



III Let my prayer rise be-fore you as in-cense;



the lift-ing up of my hands as the eve-ning sac-ri-fice.

Silence for meditation is observed, then:

PSALM PRAYER

L Let the incense of our repentant prayer ascend before you, O Lord, and let your lovingkindness descend upon us, that with purified minds we may sing your praises with the Church on earth and the whole heavenly host, and may glorify you forever and ever.

C Amen.

MOTET: A Future Waking

Paul D. Weber
(b. 1949)

In memoriam, the Rev. Dr. Mark P. Bangert

Bring us, Lord, to a future waking
in a glorious resurrection,
that we may enter heaven's gate, and dwell in thy house,
where there shall be no cloud nor sun,
no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;
no foes nor friends, but one equal communion and identity;
no ends, beginnings, but one eternity.

Keep us, Lord, so awake
in the duties of our callings,
that we may thus sleep in thy peace, and wake in thy glory,
in that kingdom which thy Son
our Saviour Christ Jesus hath purchased for us,
with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood.
Amen.

John Donne (1572–1631), a sermon from February 29, 1628

Silence for meditation is observed, then:

COLLECT

- ☒ With reverence and affection we remember before you, O everlasting God,
your servant Mark, and all our departed friends and relatives.
Keep us in union with them here through faith and love toward you,
that hereafter we may enter into your presence
and be numbered with those who serve you
and look upon your face in glory everlasting,
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- ☒ **Amen.**

The offering is gathered.

OFFERING/VOLUNTARY: Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr, BWV 663

J. S. Bach
(1685–1750)

*The offering assists in defraying costs of the Bach Cantata Vespers ministry.
Please make checks payable to Grace Lutheran Church.
You may also contribute online at www.bachvespers.org.
Your generosity is appreciated.*

We stand.

HYMN: Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendor

Concertato by Paul D. Weber



1 Lord, en - throned in heav'n - ly splen - dor, first - be -
Choir 2 Though the low - liest form now veil you as of
3 Pas - chal Lamb, your of - f'ring, fin - ished once for
4 Life - im - part - ing heav'n - ly man - na, strick - en



got - ten from the dead, you a - lone, our strong de -
old in Beth - le - hem, here as there your an - gels
all when you were slain, in its full - ness un - di -
rock with stream - ing side, heav'n and earth with loud ho -



fend - er, lift - ing up your peo - ple's head. Al - le -
hail you, branch and flow'r of Jes - se's stem. Al - le -
min - ished shall for - ev - er - more re - main, Al - le -
san - na wor - ship you, the Lamb who died, Al - le -



lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Je - sus, true and
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! We in wor - ship
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! cleans - ing souls from
lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! ris'n, as - cend - ed,



liv - ing bread! Je - sus, true and liv - ing bread!
join with them; we in wor - ship join with them.
ev - 'ry stain; cleans - ing souls from ev - 'ry stain.
glo - ri - fied; ris'n, as - cend - ed, glo - ri - fied!

Text: George H. Bourne, 1840–1925

Music: BRYN CALFARIA, William Owen, 1814–1893

✠ WORD ✠

We sit.

READING: Acts 1:1–11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

📖 The Word of the Lord.

🙏 Thanks be to God.

READING: Mark 16:14–20

¹⁴Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

¹⁹So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

📖 The Word of the Lord.

🙏 Thanks be to God.

HOMILY

The Rev. Dr. Paul D. Weber

CANTATA: *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein*, BWV 128
(On Christ's ascension into heaven alone)

Johann Sebastian Bach

*Translation of the German text and notes corresponding to each movement are below.
Background notes for the cantata are found on page 21 in this worship folder.*

1. Chorus

Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein

On Christ's ascension alone

Ich meine Nachfahrt gründe

I will ground my ascent

Und allen Zweifel, Angst und Pein

And all doubt, fear and pain

Hiermit stets überwinde;

In that way always overcome;

Denn weil das Haupt im Himmel ist,

For since the head is in heaven,

Wird seine Glieder Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ will gather his members

Zu rechter Zeit nachholen.

In at the right time.

In a great festival statement, the chorus assures us that, as Christ has ascended into heaven, we will overcome earthly problems when Christ will bring us to heaven to be with him. The text by Mariane von Ziegler is set to the beloved chorale melody *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* (All glory be to God on high, *LBW* 166). Following a brilliant instrumental introduction, the seven lines of the chorale are sung by sopranos over a rich polyphonic background of the other voices and instruments. Each of the chorale phrases is followed by an independent instrumental *ritornello* (returning section) that separates it from the following phrase. Tying the whole together, many of the instrumental and vocal phrases are built on versions of the first phrase of the chorale.

2. Recitative (tenor)

Ich bin bereit, komm, hole mich!

I am ready, come, collect me!

Hier in der Welt

Here in the world

Ist Jammer, Angst und Pein;

Is misery, fear, and pain;

Hingegen dort, in Salems Zelt,

But, there in Salem's tent,

Werd ich verkläret sein.

I shall be transfigured.

Da sehe ich Gott von Angesicht zu Angesicht,

There I will see God face to face,

Wie mir sein heilig Wort verspricht.

As his holy word promises me.

A brief unaccompanied recitative in which the believer declares a readiness to leave the troubles of the world for a transfigured eternal life, seeing God *Angesicht zu Angesicht* (face to face) in the heavenly Salem (Jerusalem).

3. Aria and Recitative (bass)

Auf, auf, mit hellem Schall

Up, up, with bright sound

Verkündigt überall:

Proclaim everywhere:

Mein Jesus sitzt zur Rechten!

My Jesus sits on the right!

Wer sucht mich anzufechten?

Who will seek to challenge me?

Ist er von mir genommen,

Even though he is taken from me,

Ich werd einst dahin kommen,

I shall one day arrive

Wo mein Erlöser lebt.

Where my Redeemer lives.

Mein Augen werden ihn in größter Klarheit schauen.

My eyes will look at him in perfect clarity.

O könnt ich im voraus mir eine Hütte bauen!

If only I could build myself a shelter beforehand!

Wohin? Vergebner Wunsch!

Wherefore? For a useless wish!

Er wohnt nicht auf Berg und Tal,

He does not dwell on mountain or valley,

Sein Allmacht zeigt sich überall;

His omnipotence appears everywhere;

So schweig, verwegner Mund,

So be silent, audacious mouth,

Und suche nicht dieselbe zu ergründen!

And do not seek to fathom it!

The trumpet joins the strings to boldly announce Christ's ascension in rising arpeggios; these yield quickly to rapid and demanding passage work, which dramatically proclaims the presence of the King. The singer enters with the same arpeggios to verbalize the announcement, *Auf, auf, mit hellem Schall* (Up, up with lively sound). The first violin soon assumes the previous role of the trumpet. All dissolves into a recitative with the sustained accompaniment of quiet strings (marked *piano*) as the believer imagines building a shelter in which to contemplate the humbling fantasy of a life with the Savior (reminiscent of Peter's comment at Christ's own Transfiguration). Reflection gives way to a repetition of the opening proclamation melodies.



4. Aria (alto and tenor)

Sein Allmacht zu ergründen,

To fathom his omnipotence,

Wird sich kein Mensch finden,

No person will be found,

Mein Mund verstummt und schweigt.

My mouth becomes still and silent.

Ich sehe durch die Sterne,

I see through the stars,

Daß er sich schon von ferne

That already from this distance

Zur Rechten Gottes zeigt.

He appears at God's right hand.

The two soloists accompanied by the *oboe d'amore* (alto oboe) marvel at the sight of the omnipotent Son sitting at God's right hand. The opening instrumental theme is picked up by the singers who proceed in the flowing 6/8 meter of this lovely duet. Much of the time the instrument provides a graceful filigree above the singers. The middle section of this *da capo* aria with its generally upward moving lines begins as the singers imagine seeing Christ in heaven; then instruments and singers return to the repetition of the opening music.

5. Chorale

Alsdenn so wirst du mich
Since you will place me
Zu deiner Rechten stellen
On your right side
Und mir als deinem Kind
And to me as your child
Ein gnädig Urteil fällen,
Give a gracious judgement,
Mich bringen zu der Lust,
Bring me to that joy
Wo deine Herrlichkeit
Where your majesty
Ich werde schauen an
I shall look upon
In alle Ewigkeit.
For all eternity.

The chorale extends the thought of the previous aria. Christ sits enthroned at God's right hand to be our Judge. The believer pleads for a gracious sentence that will allow the believer to behold his glory for all eternity. The 16th-century melody of the Ahasverus Fritsch chorale is *Was frag ich nach der Welt* (What is the world to me, *LBW* 504, where it appears with a different 17th-century chorale text). The soprano melody of the cantata is embellished in the present setting by the two horns, which play complementary descanting parts. The six-part chorale setting for instruments and voices provides a "heavenly" conclusion to the Ascension cantata.



Silence is observed, then:

- L** In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets.
- C** But now in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

We stand.

MAGNIFICAT



C My soul pro-claims the great-ness of the Lord; my spir-it re-joic-es in



God my Sav-ior, for he has looked with fa-vor on his low-ly ser-vant.



From this day all gen-er-a-tions will call me bless-ed.



The Al-might-y has done great things for me, and ho-ly is his name.



He has mer-cy on those who fear him in ev-'ry gen-er-a-tion.



He has shown the strength of his arm; he has scat-tered the



proud in their con-ceil. He has cast down the might-y from their thrones,



and has lift-ed up the low-ly. He has filled the

hun- gry with good things, and the rich he has sent a - way emp - ty.

He has come to the help of his ser- vant Is - ra - el,

for he has re-mem-bered his prom- ise of mer- cy, the prom- ise he

made to our fa- thers, to A- bra- ham and his chil- dren for- ev - er.

Glo- ry to the Fa- ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho- ly Spir - it;

as it was in the be- gin-ning, is now, and will be for- ev- er. A - men

✠ PRAYERS ✠

LITANY

☐ In peace, let us pray to the Lord. ☑ Lord, have mer - cy.

After each petition:

☐ ...let us pray to the Lord.

☑ Lord, have mer - cy.

The litany continues:

- ℣ For the faithful who have gone before us and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord.



The litany concludes:

- ℣ Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Silence is kept, then:

- ℣ Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ, our Lord.



- ℣ O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever.

☩ Amen.

- ℣ God of majesty, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be with your servants who make art and music for your people, that with joy we on earth may glimpse your beauty. Finally, bring us with all your saints to the fulfillment of that hope of perfection which will be ours as we stand before your unveiled glory. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

☩ Amen.



LORD'S PRAYER

☐ Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

☑ **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.

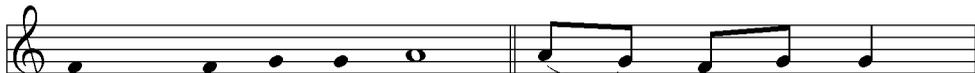
CHORAL BLESSING: The God of Peace

Paul D. Weber

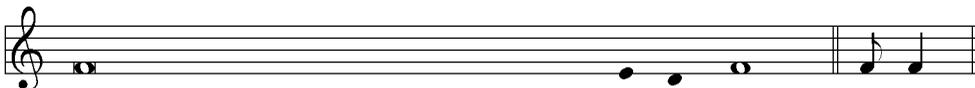
The God of peace who brought again from the dead
our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20–21

BENEDICAMUS DOMINO & BENEDICTION



☐ Let us bless the Lord. ☑ **Thanks be to God.**



☐ The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, ✠ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and pre-serve you. ☑ **A-men**

HYMN: Thine the Amen

Tune and Concertato by Carl F. Schalk
(1929–2001)



1 Thine the a - men thine the praise al - le - lu - ias an - gels raise
 2 Thine the life e - ter - nal - ly thine the prom - ise let there be
 Choir 3 Thine the tru - ly thine the yes thine the ta - ble we the guest
 4 Thine the king - dom thine the prize thine the won - der full sur - prise
 5 Thine the glo - ry in the night no more dy - ing on - ly light



thine the ev - er - last - ing head thine the break - ing of the bread
 thine the vi - sion thine the tree all the earth on bend - ed knee
 thine the mer - cy all from thee thine the glo - ry yet to be
 thine the ban - quet then the praise then the jus - tice of thy ways
 thine the riv - er thine the tree then the Lamb e - ter - nal - ly



thine the glo - ry thine the sto - ry thine the har - vest then the cup
 gone the nail - ing gone the rail - ing gone the plead - ing gone the cry
 then the ring - ing and the sing - ing then the end of all the war
 thine the glo - ry thine the sto - ry then the wel - come to the least
 then the ho - ly ho - ly ho - ly cel - e - bra - tion ju - bi - lee



thine the vine - yard then the cup is lift - ed up lift - ed up.
 gone the sigh - ing gone the dy - ing what was loss lift - ed high.
 thine the liv - ing thine the lov - ing ev - er - more ev - er - more.
 then the won - der all in - creas - ing at thy feast at thy feast.
 thine the splen - dor thine the bright - ness on - ly thee on - ly thee.

Text: Herbert F. Brokering, 1926–2009

Music: THINE, Carl Schalk, 1929–2001

Text and music © 1983 Augsburg Publishing House, admin. Augsburg Fortress

DISMISSAL

L Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God!

BACKGROUND OF THE PRELUDE

The three composers heard today were all organists and/or cantors at St. Thomas, Leipzig, during the years following Bach's tenure.

As a young student, Müller studied with one of J. S. Bach's sons. Later, he became organist of the Nicolaikirche and soon also became the assistant cantor at the Thomaskirche. He took the position of Cantor full-time upon the death of his predecessor, but he only kept that position for six years before leaving Leipzig for the Hofkapellmeister position in Weimar. This was an unusual move among the St. Thomas cantors; most kept the position until their death, including both Gustav Schreck and Ernst Richter. Schreck and Richter taught at the Leipzig Conservatory, founded by Felix Mendelssohn in 1843, and both later became professors there.

Richter was appointed Cantor of the Thomaskirche in 1868. An article written about Richter's death states: "On last Good Friday, the 150th anniversary of the first production of Bach's Matthew Passion, the dear old cantor and beloved professor...was laid to his last rest, accompanied to his grave by the solemn sound of the beautiful choral, *Jesu, meine Zuversicht*. More hearty regret has rarely filled the hearts of those standing round a musician's grave." This mention gives me pause to think whether Shreck's organ setting of this chorale, played today, was written for and played at Richter's funeral. Shreck did not assume the role of Cantor until 1892, but he was both a student and friend of Richter.

Even as musical tastes and styles changed greatly at the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th centuries, the many cantors of the Thomaskirche kept alive the music of each other and particularly that of their greatest example and mentor, J. S. Bach, performing his works and using them as models for their own compositions.

Florence Jowers

BACKGROUND OF THE CANTATA

The Ascension of Our Lord, the festival that marks the end of Christ's earthly ministry, was observed as a major civic and religious festival in Leipzig and called for worship as elaborate as on Christmas Day. For his part in the festivities over his years as St. Thomas Cantor, Bach wrote three different cantatas and the Ascension Oratorio as *Hauptmusik* (special music) for the day.

The cantata *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein* was written for Ascension Day worship on Thursday, May 10, 1725. Its libretto does not relate the events of the ascension itself, which are found in both the Acts 1:1–11 Epistle and the Mark 16:14–20 Holy Gospel. Rather, the cantata text tells of the meaning of the ascension to the believer, who will follow Jesus in overcoming the difficulties of life on the way to joyful union with him in heaven. The five-movement cantata includes chorale-based writing in the first and final movements.

The cantata is scored for 2 horns (played today by trumpets), [high] trumpet, 2 oboes and *oboe da caccia* (tenor oboe or English horn) and *oboe d'amore* (alto oboe), strings (2 violins, viola, bass), *basso continuo* (keyboard and bass), four-part chorus, and alto, tenor, and bass solos.

The author of the present cantata text was Christiane Mariane von Ziegler (1695–1760), one of the most remarkable women of her time. She was a child of the distinguished Romanus family of Leipzig. Her father, Franz Konrad Romanus, a court counselor who became the mayor of Leipzig, was imprisoned on political grounds for some forty years beginning when Mariane was but a child. She married twice, first at age 16, and then at 20; tragically, both of her husbands and their two children died in just a few years. In 1722, when she was 27, the widow returned to Leipzig and assumed legal leadership of the Romanus household, an unusual arrangement considering the subordinate role of 18th-century women in society. She was gifted as a musician, singing and playing several musical instruments. More significantly, Mariane von Ziegler also wrote and published secular and sacred poetry that included liturgical devotional texts utilized by Bach in nine of his cantatas (some with textual revisions by the composer). Curiously, in spite of her father's incarceration, Frau von Ziegler was highly respected in the community, and the Romanus-Ziegler house became a leading social and cultural gathering place of Leipzig. In 1733 she was named poet laureate, first by the Wittenberg University faculty and then by the emperor. She left Leipzig to marry a Frankfurt professor in 1741 and died there nineteen years later.

Carlos Messerli

Leading Worship Today

The Rev. David R. Lyle, leader
The Rev. Paul D. Weber, homilist
Grace Parish Choir
The Rev. Michael D. Costello, cantor
Florence Jowers, organist
Sarah Ponder, mezzo soprano
Ace Gangoso, tenor
David Govertsen, bass-baritone
Gerlinde VanDriesen, Tom Ewert,
and Mike Gillespie, ushers
Bill Rohlfing, audio engineer
Liz Hansen and Al Swanson
livestream audio/video

Grace Parish Choir

Soprano

Ann Anderson
Katrina Beck
Janel Dennen
Gwen Gotsch
Sarah Gruendler-Ladner
Kate Hogenson
Katrina Jurica
Ellen Pullin
Liz Rudy
Ngaire Whiteside-Bull

Alto

Kjersti Anderson-Uribe
Karen Brunssen
Lois Cornils
Leanne Cribbs
Lois Guebert
Catherine Hegarty
Johanna Johnson
Gaye Klopach
Christa Krout
Sarah Ponder
Karen Rohde
Irmgard Swanson
Liz Thompson

Tenor

Paul Aanonsen
John Beed
Ace Gangoso
Daniel Krout
Colin Krueger
John Rudy

Bass

Douglas Anderson
John Bouman
Mark Bouman
Karl Brunssen
Jeff Cribbs
David Govertsen
David Kluge
Bill Pullin
Greg Rohlfing

Orchestra

Charles Roberts, Jordan Olive, trumpets
Tim Coffman, Tom Stark, trombones
Richard Janicki, timpani
Christine Janzow Phillips, oboe/oboe d'amore
Meg Busse, oboe
Natalie Johnson, English horn
Dianne Ryan, bassoon
Betty Lewis, Elizabeth Brausa,
Lou Torick, Billie Howard, violin I
Paul Zafer, Becky Coffman, Irina Fatykhova, violin II
Naomi Hildner, Melissa Trier Kirk, viola
Kerena Fox, cello
Douglas Johnson, double bass
Timothy Spelbring, continuo organ
Michael D. Costello, harpsichord

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55th Year

2025-2026

BACH

Cantata Vespers



Grace Lutheran Church
River Forest, Illinois

Sunday afternoons
Lecture at 3:00 p.m.
Prelude at 3:45 p.m.

September 28

BWV 137

Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren

Praise to the Lord, the almighty King of creation

David Heim, Oak Park, Illinois, homilist

Samuel Barber: Toccata Festiva, op. 36; Chelsea Chen, organist

October 26

BWV 79

Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild *God the Lord is Sun and Shield*

L. George Detweiler, Norristown, Pennsylvania, homilist

J. S. Bach: Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068

November 23

BWV 57

Selig ist der Mann *Blessed is the man*

Katie Hines-Shah, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hinsdale, Illinois, homilist

Steven Wentz, Concordia University Chicago, organist

December 31

BWV 28

Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende *Praise God! Now the year comes to an end*

Performed as part of Grace's New Year's Eve Service of Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m.

David R. Lyle, Grace Lutheran Church and School, River Forest, Illinois, homilist

January 18

BWV 72

Alles nur nach Gottes Willen *Everything according to God's will alone*

JoAnn Post, Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Northfield, Illinois, homilist

Kontras Quartet: Eleanor Bartsch, Sherri Zhang, Ben Weber, and Jean Hatmaker

February 22

BWV 168

Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort *Settle account! Word of thunder*

Elizabeth Palmer, *The Christian Century*, Chicago, Illinois, homilist

Timothy Spelbring, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Mount Prospect, Illinois, organist

March 29

BWV 68

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt *God so loved the world*

M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, homilist

David Cherwien, Minneapolis, Minnesota, organist

April 19

BWV 146

Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen

We must enter the kingdom of God through much sorrow

Nathan Klein, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, homilist

Kapelle of Concordia University Chicago, guest choir; Charles P. Brown, conductor

Michael D. Costello, Grace Lutheran Church and School, River Forest, Illinois, organist

May 17

BWV 43

Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen *God goes up with jubilation*

Robert George Moore, St. Thomas Church, Leipzig, Germany, homilist

Gerald Finzi: Violin Concerto; Eleanor Bartsch, violinist

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BIOGRAPHIES



Michael D. Costello, director, has served as Cantor at Grace since 2008 and Artistic Director of Consonance—Chicago Choral Artists since 2014. Prior to moving to Illinois in 2008, Costello served as a church musician at parishes in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and South Carolina, and served as a pastor at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Columbia, South Carolina. Costello graduated with a Bachelor in Sacred Music from Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, and a Master of Divinity from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. An accomplished organist known best for sensitive service playing, Costello has published choral and organ works with several publishers, has sung as a baritone with St. Charles Singers and the Grant Park Music Festival Chorus, and performs regularly as a guest musician with other local ensembles.



Ace Gangoso, tenor, enjoys an eclectic musical career in Chicago as a singer, liturgical musician, pianist, and teacher. He is on the regular rosters of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, Grant Park Chorus, Chicago a cappella and Fourth Coast Ensemble; this season Ace will make his debut with the Lyric Opera Chorus. An active church musician, Ace is the Director of Music Ministry at St. John XXIII Parish in Evanston; additionally, he is a pianist for the Chicago Black Catholics Choir and a supplementary musician at several parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago. He holds bachelor's degrees from the University of Central Arkansas and a master's degree in voice performance from Northwestern University; he continues voice study with NU Professor W. Stephen Smith.



David Govertsen, bass-baritone, is a Chicago native who has appeared as a soloist with numerous opera companies, including Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, Tulsa Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, and the Haymarket Opera Company. He is a member of the vocal chamber quartet Fourth Coast Ensemble, performing art song in Chicago and throughout the Midwest. As a concert soloist Mr. Govertsen has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Madison Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Grant Park Orchestra, Santa Fe Symphony, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, among others. He is an alumnus of the Ryan Opera Center and the Santa Fe Opera and Central City Opera apprentice programs and holds degrees from Northwestern University, Northern Illinois University, and the College of DuPage. Mr. Govertsen is currently on the faculty at North Park University, Lewis University, and the College of DuPage.



Florence M. Jowers, organist, is Professor Emerita of Music at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC, where she served as University Organist and Founding Conductor of the Lenoir-Rhyne Youth Chorus, a professional children’s choir of one hundred voices. She has concertized throughout the southeast and abroad and has been heard on “Pipedreams,” the NPR radio program. Florence is a graduate of Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, and earned a master’s degree in organ performance at the Yale University School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music. She has served as director of music and/or organist in diverse congregations during her career, and in retirement she enjoys practicing on the Taylor and Boody organ at Christ Lutheran, Staunton, Virginia, and is supply organist at churches in the Shenandoah Valley near Staunton where she and her husband, Paul Weber, reside.



Betty Lewis, violinist, received her bachelor’s degree from Chicago Musical College at Roosevelt University as a student of Elaine Skorodin. She is an active violinist and violist in the Chicago area performing with groups as diverse as Broadway in Chicago shows and as an extra with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In the summer, she is on the faculty of the Birch Creek Music Performance Center and is a member of the Peninsula Music Festival, both in Door County, Wisconsin. She is the violin, viola and orchestra teacher at Grace Lutheran School and teaches violin and viola at the Chicago School of Violin Making.



Sarah Ponder, mezzo-soprano, enjoys a busy career as a soloist and versatile ensemble singer, performing with Chicago institutions such as Lyric Opera Chicago, Chicago Symphony Chorus, Chicago a cappella, William Ferris Chorale, and Music of the Baroque in addition to various appearances in the region. A passionate educator and performer, Ponder holds an outreach position with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra where she works with at-risk youth and has also recorded original works with Carnegie Hall’s Lullaby Project. She has also performed several solo concerts with famed Maestro Riccardo Muti at the piano, bringing opera to new audiences.



Paul D. Weber, homilist and composer, is a pastor of the North Carolina Synod (ELCA) and Professor Emeritus of Church Music at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, North Carolina, where he conducted the A Cappella Choir, the College Singers, and the Chapel Choir, and along with his wife, Florence Jowers, implemented the university’s sacred music program. Paul has composed a wide range of pieces, from large choral works with orchestra to hymns in the collection, *So Great a Cloud of Witnesses, A Paul D. Weber Hymnary* (Augsburg Fortress). He was awarded the Raabe Prize in 2003 by the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians. His works are published by MorningStar Music, Concordia Publishing House, and Augsburg.

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Special thanks are extended to Karen P. Danford for her translation of the cantata text from German to English, to Florence Jowers for notes on the prelude, and to Gwen Gotsch for careful editing of materials in this worship folder.

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