

Trinity Episcopal Church

Cranford, in the Diocese of New Jersey



“Study for I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” — Roman Verostko

The Fifth Sunday of Easter

‘Episcopal Community Services Sunday’

Rite I Holy Eucharist

May 3, 2026 at 8 AM

The Reverend Andrew David Kruger, Rector & Presider

Anthony Rafaniello, Director of Music

Casey Woodruff, Senior Warden & Kathleen M. Murray, Junior Warden

Welcome

Andrew Kruger

The bell is rung and the People stand.

Gathering Sentences

BCP 323

Presider Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People **The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Presider There is one Body and one Spirit;

People **There is one hope in God's call to us;**

Presider One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

People **One God and Father of all.**

Collect for Purity

BCP 323

Presider Let us pray.

People **Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid:
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love thee,
and worthily magnify thy holy Name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Kyrie

BCP 324

Presider Kyrie eleison.

People **Christe eleison.**

Presider Kyrie eleison.

**Glory be to God on high,
and on earth peace, good will towards men.
We praise thee, we bless thee,
we worship thee, we glorify thee,
we give thanks to thee for thy great glory,
O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.
O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;
O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.
For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord;
thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost,
art most high in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Let us pray.

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life:
Grant us so perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ
to be the way, the truth, and the life,
that we may steadfastly follow his steps
in the way that leadeth to eternal life;
through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The People sit.

First Reading

Acts 7:55-60

Reader A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

In te, Domine, speravi

BCP 622

1. In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; *
deliver me in your righteousness.
2. Incline your ear to me; *
make haste to deliver me.
3. Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe,
for you are my crag and my stronghold; *
for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.
4. Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *
for you are my tower of strength.
5. Into your hands I commend my spirit, *
for you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth.
15. My times are in your hand; *
**rescue me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.**
16. Make your face to shine upon your servant, *
and in your loving-kindness save me."

Second Reading

1 Peter 2:2-10

Reader A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

The People stand.

Gospel

John 14:1-14

Presider The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St John.

People **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

Jesus told his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

Presider The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

Homily

Andrew Kruger

Affirmation of Baptismal Faith

The Presider moves to the Font, and the People stand.

Friends in Christ, Baptism is not the rite of a moment but the commitment of a lifetime. In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with our Lord. Therefore let us reaffirm our Baptismal Vows together with all those who celebrate the anniversary of their baptism this month.

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil
and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

I do.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread,
and in the prayers?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and
return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as your self?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of
every human being?

I will, with God's help.

Blessing the Water

Celebrating Common Prayer

Let us give thanks to the Lord:

God is worthy of all thanksgiving and praise.

Blessèd are you, Sovereign God of all, to you be glory and praise for ever! You are our light and our salvation. From the deep waters of death you have raised your Son to life in triumph. Accept our sacrifice of praise, we pray, and sanctify these waters of your new creation, that we, with all who have been born anew by water and the Spirit, may be renewed in your image, walk by the light of faith, and serve you in newness of life; through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of praise, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessèd be God for ever.

The Presider sprinkles the people with the aspergillum, and instrumental music is offered.

Prayers of the People

BCP 328

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church and the world.

Almighty and everliving God, who in thy holy Word hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all humanity: Receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine Majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord; and grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and other ministers especially Sarah, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sean, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Sally our Bishop, and Andrew our Rector, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy Word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. We beseech thee also so to rule the hearts of those who bear the authority of government in this and every land especially Donald, our President, Rebecca Michelle, our governor, and Kathleen, the mayor of this town, that they may be led to wise decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the world.

Open, O Lord, the eyes of all people to behold thy gracious hand in all thy works, that, rejoicing in thy whole creation, they may honor thee with their substance, and be faithful stewards of thy bounty. And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succor all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear [*especially...*], beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the good examples of all thy saints, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant these our prayers, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. **Amen.**

Confession of Sin

BCP 331

Let us humbly confess our sins unto Almighty God.

The People kneel.

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against thee
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved thee with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in thy will,
and walk in thy ways,
to the glory of thy Name. Amen.**

Absolution

BCP 332

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Comfortable Words

BCP 332

Hear the Word of God to all who truly turn to him.

Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden,
and I will refresh you. *Matthew 11:28*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that
believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

Peace

BCP 332

The People stand.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Announcements

Andrew Kruger

Offertory Sentence

BCP 344

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory,
and the victory, and the majesty.

For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine.

Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

1 Chronicles 29:11



*The Ushers pass the collection plates among the People.
Alternatively, you may give to Trinity online:
scan the QR code and go directly to our Breeze link.*

The Presentation of Gifts

1 Chronicles 29:14b

Presider All things come of thee, O Lord:

People **And of thine own have we given thee.**

Eucharistic Prayer II

BCP 340

Presider The Lord be with you.

People **And with thy spirit.**

Presider Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Presider Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

People **It is meet and right so to do.**

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But chiefly are we bound to praise thee for the glorious resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the very Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by his death hath destroyed death, and by his rising to life again hath won for us everlasting life. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious Name; evermore praising thee, and saying,

**Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts:
Heaven and earth are full of thy glory.
Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The People remain standing.

All glory be to thee, O Lord our God, for that thou didst create heaven and earth, and didst make us in thine own image; and, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption.

He made there a full and perfect sacrifice for the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again.

For in the night in which he was betrayed, he took bread;
and when he had given thanks to thee, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying,
“Take, eat, this is my Body, which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

Likewise, after supper, he took the cup;
and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying,
“Drink this, all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant,
which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins.
Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Wherefore, O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy people do celebrate and make, with
these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath
commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious
death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; and looking for his coming
again with power and great glory.

And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us, and, with thy
Word and Holy Spirit, to bless and sanctify these gifts of bread and wine, that they
may be unto us the Body and Blood of thy dearly-beloved Son Jesus Christ.

And we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness to accept this our sacrifice of praise
and thanksgiving, whereby we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our
souls and bodies. Grant, we beseech thee, that all who partake of this Holy
Communion may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son
Jesus Christ, and be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction; and also that
we and all thy whole Church may be made one body with him, that he may dwell in
us, and we in him; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord;

By whom, and with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor
and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **AMEN.**

Lord's Prayer

BCP 336

And now, as our Savior Christ hath taught us, we are bold to say,

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking the Bread

BCP 337

The Presider breaks the consecrated bread. A period of silence is observed, then the Presider says

Presider Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
People **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

Prayer of Humble Access

BCP 337

**We do not presume to come to this thy Table,
O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness,
but in thy manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs
under thy Table.
But thou art the same Lord
whose property is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ,
and to drink his blood,
that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.**

Invitation

BCP 338

Presider The Gifts of God:
People **For the People of God.**

Holy Communion

The ushers guide the people to receive Holy Communion. All who hunger for God, including children, are cordially invited to share the Gifts of God offered at this table. Whoever you are, wherever you are in your life's journey, you are welcome here. All persons may, but no person must, receive communion in both kinds to receive the full spiritual benefits of communion. Wine is offered by way of a sip from the common cup. You may choose to receive only the host. Gluten-free wafers are available by simple request to the priest.

Post Communion Prayer

Traditional

Presider Let us pray.

The People stand, and all pray together

**Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee,
For that thou hast vouchsafed to feed us with this holy sacrament,
to knit us in one with Christ our Savior,
and to grant us a foretaste of that Heavenly Banquet
which thou hast prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

Prayer for Episcopal Community Services

Andrew Kruger

Then the Presider prays

O compassionate God, who hast called us to establish
Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey:
endue us, we beseech thee, with vision and grace,
that we may rightly balance works of charitable giving
with faithful striving for justice,
so that both the source and the symptoms of oppression
will be overcome and done away with;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost,
one God, world without end. **Amen.**

Blessing

BCP 339

And now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The ministers recess.

Dismissal

BCP 340

Presider Alleluia, alleluia. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.**



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For Friends, Visitors and Newcomers

Welcome to Trinity Episcopal Church in Cranford, New Jersey. Thank you for joining us in worship. The bulletin is designed to make you feel at home and includes everything you need for the service (liturgy, hymns, rubrics, etc.). Please connect with us; introduce yourself to the ushers so they can make you feel more comfortable.

All are invited to Fellowship Hour in Sherlock Hall immediately after the service. An email blast is sent every Thursday by 2 PM with hyperlinks to sign-up sheets, methods to contribute to the parish or other charitable organizations, ways to contact individuals or receive information. Please contact the parish office to receive it or alternative methods of communication.

Banns of Marriage

The Banns of Marriage are published between Axelle Bougouma and Adrian Untermyer. You are required to give your consent to their marriage; if you cannot, you are to speak now or else for ever hereafter hold your peace. The wedding date is Saturday, May 16 at 11 AM in the Church. This is the second time of asking.

Baptismal Anniversaries

When we think about birthdays, we immediately recall the date we were born and took our first breath in this world. But if we take a moment to reflect, we will realize that we have another "birthday" of even greater significance: the day we became members of the body of Christ – our Baptismal birthday.

Through the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit anoints us and sets our inner compass, to walk in a path that is pleasing to God, to do all good works that God has planned for us, and to "seek God's face" [Psalm 27:8]. This is the path that ultimately leads us into abundant life both in this earthly existence, and in the world to come. Whether baptized as a child or an adult, we prayerfully grow in our understanding and appreciation of our baptismal identity, as individuals and as a community.

Usually, on the first Sunday of every month, we acknowledge those who have a baptismal "birthday" during the month in question and share in their renewal of baptismal vows. This monthly recognition of our "birth from above" [John 3:3] allows us to develop a deeper appreciation for the essence of our baptism. Parishioners celebrating their Baptismal Anniversaries in May:

Lilianna Ilich	May 2	Christian Robinson	May 29	Susan Olszewski	May 4
Paola Cammarota	May 20	Erin Smith	May 23	Jane O'Hagan	May 19
Eric Cammarota	May 20	Wesley Ditzel IV	May 16	Matthew Rivera	May 24
Stacey Cooney	May 22	Matias Juarez	May 23	Eliza Rivera	May 24
Nelson Dittmar	May 5	Ellia Garcia	May 28	Sarah Roberts	May 21
Lillian Pettit	May 5	Sofia Juarez	May 28	Charlie Roberts	May 13
Betsy Stubbs	May 14	Luke Li	May 14	Susan Nelson	May 8
Marilyn Merkel	May	Silas Li	May 23	Alexandra Waldron	May 20
Elizabeth Morenko	May 10	Amy Taglia	May 17	Cameron Harty	May
Drew Ortiz	May 19	Anjuli Antus	May 19	Raymond Roberts	May 13
Charlotte Antus	May 19			Braden Aravena	May 15

What you need to know today...

Annual Spaghetti Dinner \$2,068 was collected; this was a huge success and the proceeds will go towards the parking lot project. Gratitude is expressed to all who supported this event.

Fellowship Hour Today, in Sherlock Hall, immediately after this service; coffee, tea and snacks are provided.

Children's Choir The choir rehearses at 11:30 AM in the church.

Outreach Committee Meeting Today at 11:30 AM in Witherington Hall.

Confirmation Class Today from 5 PM to 7 PM in Witherington Hall.

What you need to know this week...

The Daily Offices Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are offered online from Monday to Thursday at 8:30 AM and 5 PM this week.

Parish Office Hours Office Manager Marion Nechuta is available Tuesday through Thursday from 12:30 to 3:30 PM. Please call before arriving; at other times she may still be contacted via parish email.

Handbells and Choir Rehearsals This Wednesday, May 6; rehearsal for Handbells is 7 to 7:50 PM and Adult Choir is 8-9 PM.

Just Gathering This Thursday, May 7 from 6 PM to 8 PM in Fellowship Hall at Calvary Lutheran Church, 108 Eastman Street in Cranford. Come together with Cranford friends and neighbors to find common ground and build a welcoming Community. For meal planning purposes please register at <https://bit.ly/JustGathering>.

Trinity Knitting Circle This Saturday, May 9, from 10 to 11 AM in Witherington Hall.

Scouting for Food This Saturday, May 9. Support our community by participating in the "Scouting for Food" drive-through food collection. Donations of non-expired, non-perishable items will benefit Cranford Family Care. Drop off items at Cranford Family Care, Livingston Avenue School, Orange Avenue School, or Brookside Place School. Volunteers are available in the parking lots to assist.

What you need to know in the future...

Trinity Women's Group Monday, May 11 from 7 PM to 8 PM online.

Ascension Day A Rite II said service will be offered on Thursday, May 14, at 12 PM at Trinity to observe the Feast of Ascension.

Sandwich Sunday Sunday, May 17; contact Marion Nechuta (marionnechuta@yahoo.com or 908-451-4498) for more information. There are several ways to participate in this ministry (links to sign up are in the email blast):

- Sign up to supply items needed for the bags and the sandwiches
- Friday, May 15 from 6 PM to 7 PM – assemble food bags in Sherlock Hall
- Sunday, May 17 – assemble sandwiches between services and after 10 AM service
- Sunday, May 17 after Fellowship Hour – transport the sandwiches and food packets to St John’s and help serve food

Fellowship Luncheon Thursday, May 21, 12:30 to 2PM in Witherington Hall. The theme is Cinco de Mayo with fajitas and other treats. The speaker is the Union County Health Department.

Annual Trinity Sunday Barbeque Sunday, May 31 after the 10 AM Eucharist. Click on the QR code or see this week’s email blast for details and to RSVP.



Cover Art

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” by Roman Verostko (1929-2024); ceramic tile, Saint Vincent College Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leo N. Hierholzer. During his time as a member of the Saint Vincent monastic community, Verostko was responsible for several monumental projects on campus including a mural at the center of the campus library. Verostko notes: “My depiction of the glorified Jesus appears to have his feet, as it were, in two worlds – an early Byzantine world with eyes fixed on a heavenly place and the mid-20th Century world, surrounded by imagery indicative of new directions in the arts and sciences. This fusion of Byzantine and modern styles represents endeavors in all disciplines informed both by tradition and innovation.”

Episcopal Community Services (ECS) Sunday

ECS Sunday invites us into a shared, faithful work: setting a table where all are fed. Across the Diocese of New Jersey, we come together in service, reconciliation, and justice – trusting that what we do together, in Christ, can transform lives. Through Episcopal Community Services (ECS) of New Jersey, our collective generosity supports ministries addressing food insecurity, housing needs, racial justice, and community outreach, turning compassion into tangible hope.

The Epistle for this Sunday (1 Peter 2:2-10) offers a powerful image for our life together. “Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk... so that by it you may grow into salvation.” This holy longing is not only about personal faith – it is about a community shaped by God’s nourishing grace. When we have “tasted that the Lord is good,” our hunger changes. We begin to hunger not only for God, but for justice; not only for grace, but for a world where no neighbor goes without daily bread.

Peter reminds us that we are “living stones... built into a spiritual house.” Alone, a single stone cannot shelter or sustain – but together, we become something strong enough to serve, protect, and nourish. ECS Sunday is a reminder that the Church is not simply a place we gather; it is a people sent out, built together for the sake of others. In a time when over a million of our neighbors in New Jersey face food insecurity, this calling could not be more urgent.

Through ECS, our diocese lives out this identity – pooling resources, funding grassroots ministries, and equipping parishes to respond to both immediate needs and systemic injustice. When you give, pray, and act, you are helping to set a wider table – one where dignity is restored, barriers are broken down, and all are welcomed and fed.

There are many ways to participate: include ECS in your prayers, engage in local service, empower our youth to learn and act, and help share the story of this vital ministry. We also invite you to support the special ECS Sunday collection, which fuels this life-changing work across our diocese. To give and learn more, please visit ecs-nj.org/2026-ecs-sunday. Each step, however small, becomes part of something larger.

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people.” On ECS Sunday, we live into that truth – becoming a community shaped by mercy, built for justice, and committed to ensuring that there is a place, and a meal, for everyone at God’s table.

Liturgy and Lectionary

We begin today the fifth of the seven weeks of the Christian year set apart to celebrate the dying and rising of Jesus. The Gospel reading today is a discussion between Jesus and his disciples, particularly Thomas and Philip, about the results of his dying and rising. He is revealed to be the Way into eternal life, and in knowing Jesus we know and are known by the Father.

Today's reading from Acts describes the martyrdom of Stephen, the first Christian to suffer death for the name of Christ. This is itself a particularly strong witness to the resurrection of Jesus; as Stephen joins his Lord in dying he sees Jesus raised from the dead and leading him into God's eternal kingdom.

In the second reading today Peter applies to us the words of God to the people of Israel during their Exodus. By virtue of our baptism into Jesus' dying and rising, we are set apart as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," with the vocation of making God's wonderful deeds known to all people.

In the Eucharistic celebration, we are revealed as the royal priesthood. In most religions, the priesthood is a small group of people who stand between God and the rest of the people. Christians, however, all stand before God on behalf of the entire human race; on behalf, indeed, of the whole creation. That priesthood is enacted most clearly as we stand before God in intercession and in thanksgiving in the Eucharistic liturgy.

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