



55th Year
2025-2026

BACH

Cantata Vespers

**Grace Lutheran Church
River Forest, Illinois**

BACH

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Welcome to the 55th season of
Bach Cantata Vespers!

We hope you will join us at these monthly worship services in which God's Word is proclaimed through the magnificent music of J. S. Bach.

Each service begins with a prelude at 3:45 p.m. offering interesting and varied repertoire for pipe organ, orchestra, and small ensembles. Vespers begins at 4:00 as we join our voices to sing the Service of Light, with its promise that Jesus Christ is "the light no darkness can overcome." Choral motets, hymns of faith, and excellent preaching follow, leading up to the cantata. Sent out with a final hymn, we depart, renewed and inspired for the days ahead.

This season we continue to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Bach's annual cantata cycles. This year's cantatas are largely drawn from Bach's third cycle of cantatas in Leipzig, spanning 1725-1727. The cantatas scheduled for November and February are new to us, having never before been performed at Bach Vespers.





Each month's service contains unique musical offerings. In September we welcome Chelsea Chen back to the organ at Grace to perform Samuel Barber's spectacular *Toccata Festiva* with the Bach Vespers orchestra. In October we hear Bach's beloved Orchestral Suite in D Major. Later in the season we welcome organists Steven Wente, Timothy Spelbring, and David Cherwien to play the prelude and lead congregational singing. And we will be ringing in 2026 with a cantata service at 7:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve!

In 2026 we again welcome Concordia University Chicago's Kapelle. May brings Eleanor Bartsch performing Gerald Finzi's breathtaking violin concerto. At this final service of the season, we will also hear from a special homilist, Pastor Robert George Moore from Bach's own church in Leipzig.

It is a full year of making music to the glory of God and, as Bach himself said, "the permissible delights of the soul." *We cannot do it without you and your generous gifts.* Please consider supporting Bach Cantata Vespers financially, either by returning a check in the enclosed envelope, or by making a gift online at www.bachvespers.org.

Soli Deo Gloria!

The Rev. Michael D. Costello, Grace Cantor

Year at a glance...

September 28 BWV 137

Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren

David Heim, homilist; Chelsea Chen, organist

Samuel Barber: Toccata Festiva, op. 36

October 26 BWV 79

Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild

L. George Detweiler, homilist

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

November 23 BWV 57

Selig ist der Mann

Katie Hines-Shah, homilist; Steven Wente, organist

December 31 BWV 28

Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende

Performed as part of Grace's New Year's Eve

Service of Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m.

David R. Lyle, homilist

January 18 BWV 72

Alles nur nach Gottes Willen

JoAnn Post, homilist; Kontras Quartet

February 22 BWV 168

Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort

Elizabeth Palmer, homilist; Timothy Spelbring,, organist

March 29 BWV 68

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt

M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), homilist; David Cherwien, organist

April 19 BWV 146

Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen

Nathaniel P. Klein, homilist; Michael D. Costello, organist

Kapelle of Concordia University Chicago, guest choir

Charles P. Brown, conductor

May 17 BWV 43

Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen

Robert George Moore, homilist

Gerald Finzi: Violin Concerto; Eleanor Bartsch, violinist



Mark Peters on Bach

Join us at 3:00 for pre-service lectures.

Dr. Mark Peters is professor of music and director of the Center for Teaching and the Good Life at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. He teaches courses on music and the arts in relation to individuals, societies, and cultures, seeking to instill in students the perspective that practices of creating and of engaging human creativity are fundamental aspects of our shared humanity.

Each month Peters' pre-service lectures offer insights into the cantata that will be presented in the worship service. Join us at 3:00 p.m. in the Seminar Room on Grace's lower level to learn more about the background of the cantata and Bach's music.

Peters holds a Ph.D. in historical musicology from the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of *A Woman's Voice in Baroque Music: Mariane von Ziegler and J. S. Bach* (Ashgate, 2008) and co-editor with Reginald L. Sanders of *Compositional Choices and Meaning in the Vocal Music of J. S. Bach* (Lexington, 2018).

Mark Peters



September 28 *BWV 137*

Lobe den Herren, den mächtigen König der Ehren

Praise to the Lord, the almighty King of creation

Originally performed on the 12th Sunday after Trinity, August 19, 1725, this festive work based on the beloved Lutheran chorale opens our 55th year of Bach Cantata Vespers at Grace. Scored for a large Baroque orchestra and full complement of soloists and chorus, the music rings out with sounds of praise for the God who created, redeemed, and sustains us.

Renowned organist Chelsea Chen returns to Grace to perform Samuel Barber's *Toccata Festiva* as the prelude to the service at 3:45 p.m. This virtuosic work for organ and symphony orchestra will be presented in a version for chamber orchestra prepared by composer Mark Buller.

3:00 p.m. **Cantata Preview Lecture**

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. **Orchestral/Organ Prelude**

Samuel Barber: *Toccata Festiva*, op. 36

Chelsea Chen, organist



Chelsea Chen





4:00 p.m.

Bach Cantata Vespers

David Heim, Oak Park, Illinois, homilist

César Franck: Psalm 150, FWV 69, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Nini Marchese, soprano

Emlynn Shoemaker, mezzo soprano

Brian Skoog, tenor

Peter Wesoloski, baritone



David Heim



Nini Marchese



Emlynn Shoemaker



Peter Wesoloski



Brian Skoog

October 26 BWV 79

Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild

God the Lord is Sun and Shield

On Reformation Sunday we sing Bach's cantata *God the Lord is Sun and Shield*, first performed in Leipzig on Reformation Day, October 31, 1725. With the steady beat of timpani undergirding the horn obligato, the chorus proclaims the glorious "sun and shield" text from Psalm 84. The horns return in the third movement in the familiar chorale setting of Martin Rinkart's 17th century hymn "Now Thank We All Our God."

The prelude to this festive service is Bach's great Orchestral Suite in D Major. This rich and varied work for Baroque orchestra opens with a formal French overture. The familiar second movement, known as "Air on the G String," is followed by a trio of Baroque dances.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Orchestral Prelude

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

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

L. George Detweiler, Norristown, Pennsylvania, homilist

Otto Nicolai: Psalm 84, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Maura Janton Cock, soprano

Sarah Ponder, mezzo soprano

Daniel Eifert, bass



L. George Detweiler



Maura Janton Cock



Daniel Eifert



Sarah Ponder

November 23 BWV 57

Selig ist der Mann

Blessed is the man

The cantata for November 23, the last Sunday in the church year, was first performed on December 26, 1725, the feast day of the first Christian martyr, Saint Stephen. This beautiful dialogue cantata is a conversation between Christ and the soul of the believer, represented by the bass and soprano soloists. The voice of Christ assures the soul that peace and life await in eternity, and the soprano's final aria is joyful and tender as the soul anticipates departing this earthly life to be with Jesus. This is the first performance of this beautiful cantata at Grace.

Dr. Steven Wentz performs the organ prelude to the service beginning at 3:45 p.m.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Organ Prelude

Steven Wentz, Concordia University Chicago, organist



Steven Wentz

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

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

Hans Leo Hassler: Ach Herr, laß dein' leibe Engelein, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Carolynne DalMonte, soprano

Daniel Eifert, bass



Katie Hines-Shah



December 31 BWV 28

Gottlob! nun geht das Jahr zu Ende

Praise God! Now the year comes to an end

On New Year's Eve we will hear this cheerful cantata written by Bach for the last Sunday of 1725. Its five concise movements thank God for the gifts of the past year and ask that these blessings continue in the year to come. The Baroque, dance-like opening aria for soprano is immediately followed by the chorale *Nun lob, mein Seel, den Herren* (My soul, now praise your maker), set by Bach in the older contrapuntal style of the church motet. Join us as we welcome a new year with prayer and praise!

There is no pre-service lecture or extended prelude.

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

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Carolyn DalMonte, soprano

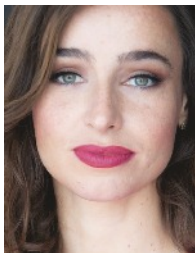
Emlynn Shoemaker, mezzo soprano

Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

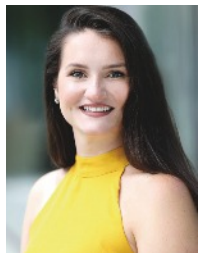
David Govertsen, bass



David R. Lyle



Carolyn DalMonte



Emlynn Shoemaker



Ryan Townsend Strand



David Govertsen

January 18 BWV 72

Alles nur nach Gottes Willen

Everything according to God's will alone

This cantata for the Third Sunday after Epiphany was first performed on January 27, 1726. Drawing its themes from the biblical account of Jesus healing a leper, the cantata describes how the believer finds comfort in trusting that all things ultimately come to fulfillment in God's gracious will. The cantata concludes with the chorale *Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh allzeit* (What my God wills, that always occurs), a hymn of faith and contentment well known to Bach's Leipzig congregation.

The prelude to the service at 3:45 p.m. will be performed by Grace's string quartet-in-residence, the Kontras Quartet.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Instrumental Prelude

Kontras Quartet, Chicago, Illinois



Kontras Quartet

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

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

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten, BWV A 7, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra

Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Katelyn Lee, soprano

Sarah Ponder, mezzo soprano

Peter Wesoloski, baritone



JoAnn Post



February 22 BWV 168

Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort

Settle the account! Word of thunder

Churches in Leipzig were not permitted to perform concerted music during the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent. So, During Lent of 2026 we look to a cantata from Bach's third annual cycle that was originally performed on the 9th Sunday after Trinity in July of 1725. Based on the parable in Luke 16 about a dishonest manager, the dramatic music of the opening aria shows an all-powerful God who demands accountability from the people. The later movements of the cantata, however, bring resolution as text and music remind listeners that Jesus' sacrificial death has paid their debt. This marks the first performance of this cantata in our series at Grace.

The organ prelude to the service at 3:45 p.m. is performed by Timothy Spelbring, a familiar presence as organist and continuo player for cantata services at Grace.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Organ Prelude

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



Elizabeth Palmer



Timothy Spelbring

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

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

Dieterich Buxtehude: Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort, BuxWV 27, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Susan Nelson, soprano

Sarah Ponder, mezzo soprano

Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

Daniel Eifert, bass

March 29 BWV 68

Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt

God so loved the world

Although this cantata was composed for the Second Day of Pentecost in 1725, its rich and buoyant setting of John 3:16 makes it appropriate for the Sunday of the Passion. This cantata is quite unusual in its structure, drawing on sources from an earlier cantata and concluding with a double fugue rich with imagery about the relationship between faith and the gift of eternal life.

Renowned organist, composer, and conductor David Cherwien plays the prelude at 3:45 p.m. and leads the congregational singing from the organ during the vespers service.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Organ Prelude

David Cherwien: Minneapolis, Minnesota, organist



David Cherwien



Daniel Carroll

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

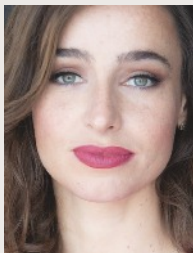
M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, homilist

Heinrich Schütz: Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt, SWV 380, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Carolyne DalMonte, soprano

David Govertsen, bass



Carolyne DalMonte



David Govertsen

April 19 BWV 146

Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen

*We must enter the kingdom of God
through much sorrow*

The title for this cantata, written for the Third Sunday of Easter, is misleading. While the cantata does at first point to the suffering that Christians endure in the world, the initial sorrow changes to joyful Easter hope of a future life in the kingdom of God. The sinfonia for organ and orchestra and the opening chorus are based on movements from an earlier concerto, which Bach again reused for his concerto for harpsichord in D minor (BWV 1052).

We welcome the Kapelle of Concordia University Chicago as the guest choir for this cantata and their conductor, Dr. Charles P. Brown. Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello performs the organ solo in the cantata's sinfonia and the organ prelude to the service at 3:45 p.m.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Organ Prelude

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

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

Nathaniel P. Klein, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, homilist

Johannes Eccard: Wir singen all mit Freudenschall, motet

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

Carolyn DalMonte, soprano

Emlynn Shoemaker, mezzo soprano

Brian Skoog, tenor

David Govertsen, bass



Concordia University Chicago's Kapelle



May 17 BWV 43

Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen

God goes up with jubilation

Concluding the 55th year of Bach Cantata Vespers at Grace is the magnificent Ascension cantata *Gott fährt auf mit Jauchzen* (God goes up with jubilation), written by Bach for the feast of the Ascension and first performed on May 30, 1726. The large orchestra, complete with three trumpets and timpani, points to the festive nature of the day. After the opening chorus, each vocal soloist takes a turn with a recitative and aria before the final chorale.

Eleanor Bartsch, first violinist with the Kontras Quartet and violinist with Lyric Opera of Chicago, joins the Bach Cantata Vespers Orchestra to perform Gerald Finzi's Violin Concerto as the prelude to the service at 3:45 p.m.

3:00 p.m. Cantata Preview Lecture

Mark Peters, Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights

3:45 p.m. Orchestral Prelude

Gerald Finzi: Violin Concerto

Eleanor Bartsch, Chicago, Illinois, violinist



Eleanor Bartsch



Robert George Moore

4:00 p.m. Bach Cantata Vespers

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

Ralph Vaughan Williams: O Clap Your Hands, motet

Bach Cantata Vespers Chorus and Orchestra
Grace Cantor Michael D. Costello, conducting

Maura Janton Cock, soprano

Emlynn Shoemaker, mezzo soprano

Ace Gangoso, tenor

David Govertsen, bass

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