

Lord, how often  
should I forgive?

MATTHEW 18:21



# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

Email: [st.paulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net)

[www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org)

[www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com](http://www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com)

## Announcements

**WELCOME** Thank you for being with us.

We are a Christian church within the Lutheran tradition (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America) and we welcome people of all Christian traditions as well as people of other faiths and people of little or no faith. Christian worship has been offered to God in this congregation for 184 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

**Restrooms** are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury lobby) and the narthex. Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms.

**Thank you for your faithfulness** in sending your offering through the mail or by using online options from your financial institution or through the “Donate” now from the church website [stpaulsyork.org](http://stpaulsyork.org). Your gifts are keeping us current with the commitments associated with St. Paul’s and our ministry partners.

**Ushers are needed.** New guidelines are in place. Please contact the church secretary if you can serve. (New procedures were emailed to those who historically served and are also in the August *Our Church* newsletter)

We continue to experience a surge in families needing assistance through the Food Pantry. We can use some additional volunteers. We are seeking folks who are not in the “at risk” category for COVID-19. Simply notify Larry or Janet Moore if you can help on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning. **Our most critical need is with help on Tuesday mornings.**

Our COVID-19 task force is assisting us as we remain open at St. Paul’s. Please thank Deacon Ellen Doughty, Dr. Jessica Ericson, Sheridan Palmer, Deacon Harold Sargeant, and Tim Yakim for their dedication and service.

**Thank you** to Victor Fields for the use of his sound system for the outdoor service.



Flowers This Week

*This week's flowers are given to the Glory of God in loving memory of husband George, and in loving memory of son, Michael Kemper, by loving wife and mother, Ann Kemper.*

## STAFF

Pastor

Youth Director

Organist, Choir Director

Bookkeeper

Secretary

Sexton

Preschool Director

Reverend Stanley Reep [prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net)

Kelly Moore-Spencer [kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net)

Victor Fields [vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net)

Dale Zeiger [dzeiger.stpaulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:dzeiger.stpaulsyork@comcast.net)

Patee Pizzirusso [st.paulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net)

Ted Weikert [st.paulsyork@comcast.net](mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net)

Deb Becker [director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com](mailto:director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com)

## **Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19**

### **Entering and Leaving the Church:**

*Face masks are required both inside and outside. If you do not have a mask you may use one of the pre-packaged masks located at the entrances or at the usher stations. (If a face mask was provided upon arrival, kindly deposit it in the specially marked basket at the exterior doors or at the usher stations as you leave so that it can be properly washed and prepared for use again.)*

*Kindly sign in at the door through which you entered. This will help if we need to be in contact.*

*Please take your service bulletin with you or dispose of it properly. Please don't place it back into a basket.*

### **Offerings:**

*Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave or at the usher stations outdoors prior to the service or immediately following the service. You may also donate via our website at [www.stpaulsnyork.org](http://www.stpaulsnyork.org)*

### **While in the Nave or on the lawn:**

*You may sit together as a family. Outside worshippers should place their lawn chairs using social distancing. Inside worshippers should sit in designated pews only (green card 10:30 AM. We ask that you practice social distancing from one family to the next within the pew.*

### **Communion Procedure:**

***For the outside service:** Communion positions are designated with a chalk cross marked on the sidewalks on Springettsbury Ave. and surrounding the lawn. Wearing your face mask., proceed to the closest sidewalk and take your place at a Communion position.*

***For inside services:** Ushers will direct you. The pulpit side of the nave communes first followed by the font side.*

*Wearing your face mask, come to the chancel step taking your place at one of the five positions marked on the chancel floor with a green cross.*

*Your entire household may gather at one of the five positions marked by the green cross.*

#### **For all to receive the sacrament:**

- *Extend your arms and cup your hands together to receive the host.*
- *Please do not reach out to take it from the minister.*
- *Once the minister has moved to the next group, then remove your mask, receive the host, replace your mask and return to your pew/seat by the closest side aisle. There is no need to hurry.*

#### ***In our prayers we remember...***

***Marianne Moran, Rick Hock, Betty Mehring, Drew Herdson, Dana Sodor, David List, Sandy Shellenberger, Brian McKenna, Abbie Gayle Guyton, Amanda, Jim Young, Penny Bailey, Eddie Turner, Sr., Jessica Ericson, Kristine Gross, Porter Stacey, the family and loved ones of Gene Shue, especially his wife Norma.***

# Fifteenth Sunday of Pentecost

September 13, 2020

8:00 & 10:30 AM

During the time of COVID -19

**PRELUDE**

*Oh Blest the House Whatever Befall*

G. F. Kauffman

*Stand*

## **BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

In the name of the Father and of the Son ✝ and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Almighty God, to 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 your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**


In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☐ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## **APOSTOLIC GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**HYMN OF PRAISE** *The cantor sings the refrain, then it is sung by all at the appointed time. The stanzas are sung by the cantor. The congregation sings the final "Amens".*



*Refrain*

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

1 Lord God, heav'n-ly King, al - might-y God and Fa-ther, we

wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.

**Refrain**

2 Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of

God, you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us;

you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re-ceive our prayer.

**Refrain**

3 For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the

Lord, you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the

Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.

**Congregation sings**

A - men, a - men.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. . . O God, we thank you for your Son who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow his commands; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*Sit*

## READING **Genesis 50:15-21**

<sup>15</sup>Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" <sup>16</sup>So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, <sup>17</sup>'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. <sup>21</sup>So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them

*At the conclusion of the reading* The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

## PSALM **Psalm 103:8-13** *spoken responsively by half verse*

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is full of compas- | sion and mercy,\*

**slow to anger and | of great kindness.**

<sup>9</sup> He will not al- | ways accuse us,\*

**nor will he keep his an- | ger forever.**

<sup>10</sup> He has not dealt with us according | to our sins,\*

nor rewarded us according | to our wickedness.

<sup>11</sup> For as the heavens are high | above the earth,\*

**so is his mercy great upon | those who fear him.**

<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is | from the west,\*

so far has he removed our | sins from us.

<sup>13</sup> As a father cares | for his children,\*

**so does the LORD care for | those who fear him.**

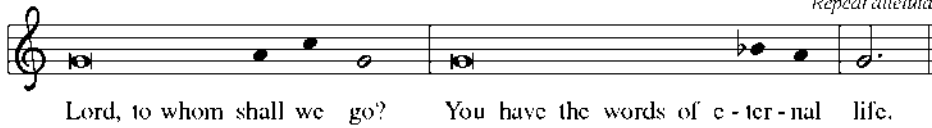
*Stand*

VERSE

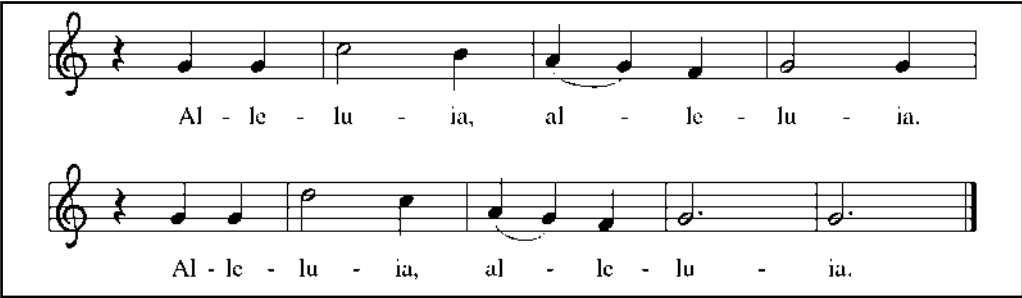
*Sung by cantor*



*Continued on next page...*



**Congregation repeats Alleluia**



**HOLY GOSPEL**

**Matthew 21-35**

*(back cover)*

The Holy Gospel according to **St. Matthew**  
*At the conclusion of the Gospel.*  
The Gospel of the Lord.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Sit*

**SERMON**

**Pastor Reep**

*Stand*

**APOSTLE'S CREED**

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

**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 into hell.\***

**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.**

**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. Amen.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

*A brief silence.*

You welcome us when we are weak in faith. Uphold your church throughout the world; make it a place of welcome. Strengthen faith through Bible studies and Sunday schools, confirmation classes and youth ministries. Nurture new ministries of education and growth. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

The heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. Have compassion on your creation. Where human selfishness has brought ruin and destruction, we look to you to heal, renew, and redeem your world. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Make your ways known to the nations. Speak kindness to our bitter grudges. Settle our hearts when we want to settle accounts with violence. Bless our leaders with patience and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Bring healing and justice wherever harm is dealt. Provide vindication for all who are oppressed. Free victims of human trafficking and forced labor; deliver all who are bound by debt. Feed all who hunger, and guard refugees fleeing famine, poverty, and war. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Teach us to forgive. Remind us that you do not always accuse us. Still our tongues when we are tempted to pass judgment and argue over opinions. Make this congregation a community of mercy for one another and for all our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. We thank you for those who have showed us faithfulness, for the knees that taught us how to bow to you and the tongues that taught us to praise you. Lord, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Sit*

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

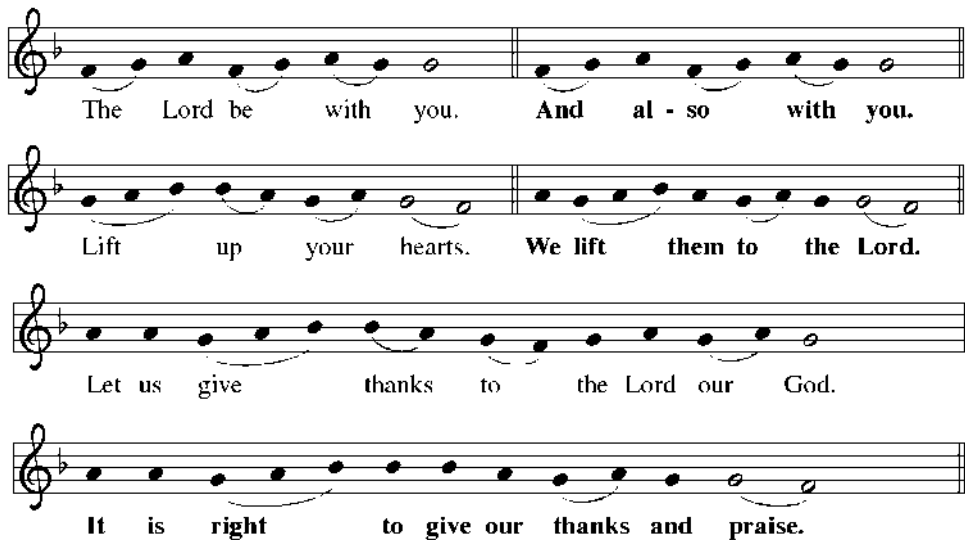
Merciful Father,

**we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**



**DIALOGUE**

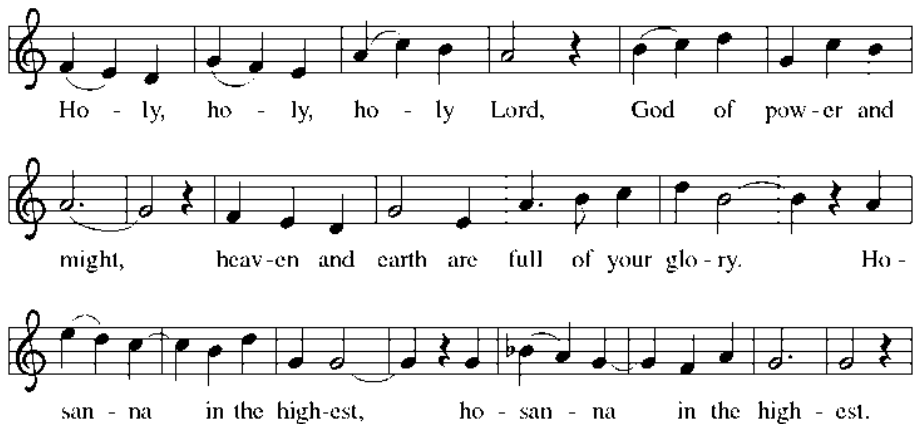
*sung by Pastor/congregation*



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

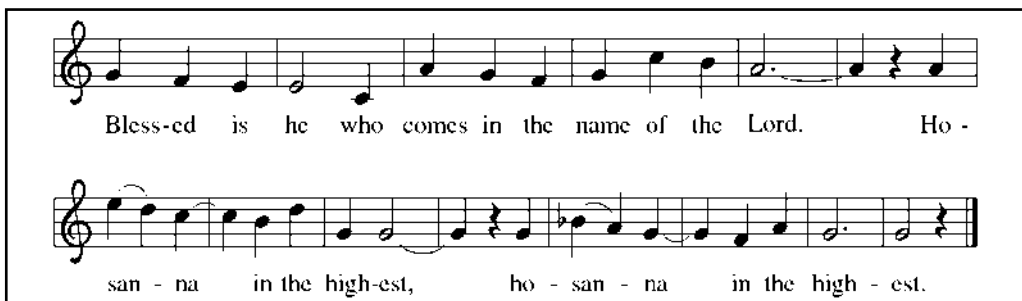
**PREFACE** *The preface appropriate to the day is sung*

**SANCTUS** *Sung by cantor. Congregation joins at the "Blessed is he..."*



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and  
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

*Congregation joins in singing*



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -  
san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,  
that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,

that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his holy supper.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup,

gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

**FRACTION** *a brief silence is kept*

**AGNUS DEI** *sung by cantor*



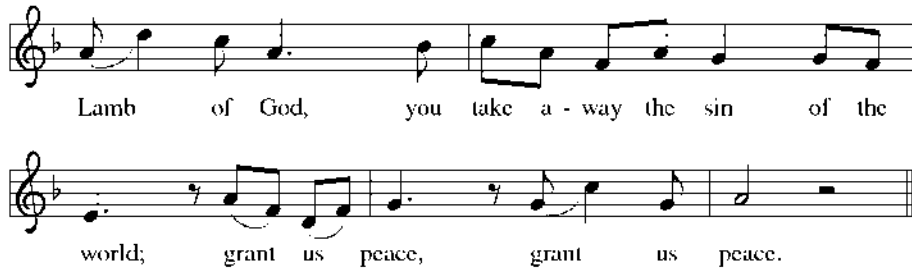
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you



take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.



*Sit*     *The pastor cleanses hands and prepares for the distribution of Holy Communion.*

## **COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL**

*Instructions for receiving the sacrament are on the inside front cover of the bulletin.*

**HYMN**     *Where Charity and Love Prevail*  
*(congregation joins in humming the melody)*

*Stand*

## **POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**Amen**

## **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**HYMN**     *Jesus Shall Reign (Stanza 1 & 5) back pages*

## **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord     **Thanks be to God.**

## **POSTLUDE**

*Paeon*

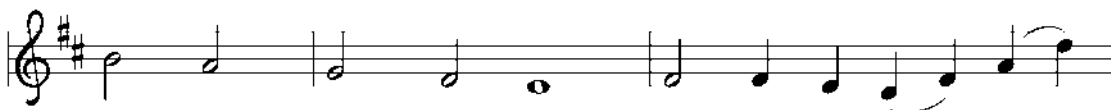
*Craig Phillips*

## Stanzas 1 & 5

### Jesus Shall Reign



1 Je - sus shall reign wher - e'er the sun does its suc -  
2 To him shall end - less prayer be made, and prais - es  
3 Peo - ple and realms of ev - 'ry tongue dwell on his  
4 Bless - ings a - bound wher - e'er he reigns: the pris - 'ners  
5 Let ev - 'ry crea - ture rise and bring pe - cu - liar



ces - sive jour - neys run; his king - dom stretch from  
throng to crown his head; his name like sweet per -  
love with sweet - est song; and in - fant voic - es  
leap to lose their chains, the wea - ry find e -  
hon - ors to our king; an - gels de - scend with



shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more,  
fume shall rise with ev - 'ry morn - ing sac - ri - fice,  
shall pro - claim their ear - ly bless - ings on his name,  
ter - nal rest, and all who suf - fer want are blest.  
songs a - gain, and earth re - peat the loud a - men.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, alt.

Music: DUKE STREET, attr. John Hatton, d. 1793

**Thank You for Your Consistent Giving**—During this time of pandemic we cannot thank you enough for your generous, consistent gifts to the church. Without them we would need to radically rethink our daily operation. Knowing that this is the month in which we transition from our construction loan to a traditional mortgage, the future lender has been keeping abreast of our financial commitment to the ministry undertaken by St. Paul's. To that end we are grateful that we do not need to seek out a new lender, or worse yet, scramble to show our financial capability. Because you have consistently given throughout these months of physical distancing we are able to continue to carry out the plans outlined and set forth at the annual meeting held last November. Thank you for financial giving to the work and witness carried out through St. Paul's Lutheran Church. We also extend our appreciation to the ongoing work of our Finance Committee.

**Small group musical ensembles are forming.** Please contact Victor Fields if you are willing to participate; vocally, handbells, instruments, percussion. Thank you.

**HARVEST WINE DINNER AND AUCTION—IMPORTANT NOTICE**—On behalf of the entire event committee, thank you for your interest and excitement in the 2020 Italian Wine Dinner and Auction. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we must postpone the event until October 16, 2021. While this event is a very important fundraiser for our ministry, the health and safety of those around us are our highest priority. For those of you who have already purchased your tickets, we will gladly refund your ticket price. Please contact the church office at 717-843-8155 by October 1, 2020 and a refund check will be sent. For those of you who would prefer that your ticket price be made as a donation to the St. Paul's Food Pantry and Preschool (proceeds recipients), please do nothing. Your ticket price will automatically be considered a donation if we do not hear from you by October 1st. Thank you for your support in 2019 which made our fundraiser successful. We're looking forward to seeing everyone in 2021 for an even more successful night of fun and fellowship.

### **Food Pantry—September**

**Items needed:** Canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned meats, mashed potato mix, rice, pasta side dish and peanut butter. We are in need of volunteers for the summer. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh or Janet and Larry Moore. Plastic Bags are always needed. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a "special" envelope marked "Pantry".



Boy Scout Troop 19 is taking orders for the sale of popcorn and/or nuts in September. We will not be selling in-person this year. Our order will be placed in mid-October and will be available on November 14. If interested in helping out our troop and their program, please call Nancy Banta @ 717 848 6627 for more information. Thanks so much.

**Tomorrow, September 14 the Church observes Holy Cross Day.** The Prayer of the Day is as follows: *Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high up on the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. Grant that we who glory in his death for our salvation may also glory in his call to take up our cross and follow him; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.* We will observe the day with Vespers at 6:30 PM. If the weather is cooperative we will gather on the south lawn encircling the large wooden lawn cross. If there is rain, we will hold the liturgy in the Church Nave. Worshipers are asked to bring a cross that holds significant meaning for them. The crosses will be placed on tables at the base of the cross for all to view. The Liturgy will be recorded and posted on the church website and Facebook page.

### **The Lord's Prayer Confirmation Sessions Began Last Tuesday September 8**

The first session of Confirmation Ministry was held on Tuesday September 8 at 6:00 PM in Christ Hall. The design of the program this season will allow for in person or remote participation by students grade 7 and up who have not yet confirmed their faith in Christ Jesus. Participants will be provided with a new study Bible. This is an edition of the sacred scripture that has proved helpful in past years and is accessible for students beginning the seventh grade. We will practice social distancing; each participant will have their own table and supplies. The sessions will video record the presenters (not the participants) so that any student not able to attend can have access to the session and complete the work independently. In addition to the Tuesday evening sessions scheduled, worship notes will be an ongoing part of the program. The worship notes forms will be provided along with all other necessary class materials. Worship notes can be completed through in person worship or by participating via the video recorded service posted to the church website. It is critically important that confirmation students who are not able to meet in person for class sessions discuss the materials with a member of their household. It is through conversations that faith and life is engaged. To enroll for the fall session please contact the church office 717-843-8155. The Confirmation Ministry follows the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. We hope that all of our students grade 7 and up will engage in this ministry.

## **Christian Education this Fall**

Growing in our faith is important in our lives as Christians. Currently, being together in large groups to learn, share and grow is not advisable. The Christian Education Committee and church staff are planning education to be held at other times.

Monday ZOOM with Pastor McKee

Tuesday Confirmation Class with Pastor Reep and Miss Kelly

Wednesday Bible Study with Pastor Reep

**Parents**—Watch for your next issue of Spark Family Magazine which you should be receiving in late September. St. Paul's Church pays for this subscription to be sent to your home four times a year to help in your faith journey with your children. During this time when we cannot meet regularly for education at the church, this magazine will be especially helpful in your child's faith formation. We hope that you enjoy this time learning together. Watch for further ideas in the October newsletter. Please let us know how it goes and send pictures of your experiences.

Sincerely,

The Christian Education Committee

## **Discussions on the Letters to the Phillipians**

**Four Monday evenings at 7:00 PM via ZOOM**

**September 21, 28 October 5, 12.**

Join Pastor Tom McKee in conversations on Paul's letters to the church in Philippi! St. Paul wrote letters to the Christians in Philippi to encourage them to keep the faith during difficult times. We will read part of a chapter each week. Pastor McKee will give some historical background. Participants will be invited to share what stands out to them and then reflect on what this means for their lives. This class will meet via Zoom. Please contact the church office to be provided with the link to the weekly study.

**Wednesday Bible Study, @ 10:30 AM-** Studying the scriptures together deepens our knowledge of the biblical content, renews faith and draws us closer together as a community of Christ. We will be studying the Old Testament reading and gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday morning. In the month of September our discussion will include Old Testament texts of Ezekiel, Genesis, and Jonah; and gospel texts in Matthew focusing on chapters 18 through 20. The group will gather in Christ Hall. We will practice physical distancing allowing ample space between participants. The sound system in Christ Hall will be utilized so that everyone should be able to hear even if positioned further from the leader.

Pops. That was what we called our grandpa Reep. He was loving and sensitive, in many ways a giant sort of teddy bear. He physically worked hard. He had huge hands; strong, rough, skilled hands. He put out a massive garden, grafted fruit trees so that they would bear several different kinds of fruit each season. He was wise. He spent evenings reading books and always concluded with reading from the Bible. When his older sister left the tenth grade to get a job, he left the eighth grade to get a job to earn money to free his younger siblings from an orphanage. Pops, our Pops, made a tremendous sacrifice to put his family together after calamity had separated them. This was not a story of jealousy or resentment or revenge. This was a story of God bringing to fruition a Genesis, a new beginning.

There was a vacant lot between my childhood home and the home of my grandparents, Pops and Gertrude. Yes, we called Grandma Reep, Gerty. It was always Pops and Gerty. They went together like peanut butter and jelly. Pops was gentle. Gertrud McFadden had an Irish temper. They both contributed to my understanding of forgiveness, and how making a way forward, was always better than being right. That vacant lot was the place where we played. It was a softball ball field, a football field, a badminton court, a camp site, and when my brothers and I would get into a tiff, fight, argue, disagree, over who was out while playing soft ball, who was tagged in football, and who was making up rules as they went along in some other game, Pops would always come over to us and say “boys, don’t be ugly with one another. There are enough people who are going to treat you dirty, don’t treat each other that way, you are brothers.” Pop’s word was “don’t be ugly to one another.”

And when we would take our grievance from the vacant lot to grandma Gerty she would say “Every dog has his day.” It was her way of letting you know to let things go, drop the animosity, stop seeking revenge. Move on with life. Who would ever think that you could juxtapose “don’t be ugly” and “every dog has his day” in a sermon on forgiveness?

Forgiveness is front and center in the lectionary readings this morning. Joseph is granting forgiveness to his brothers; brothers who were pretty ugly towards him. But in the final chapter of the book that means beginnings forgiveness is what makes a way. And Peter questioning Jesus about how many times to forgive not knowing how many times he will deny the Lord.

Joseph had dreams, dreams the future of which were unfathomable for his older brothers and his dear old dad Jacob. It was his dreams of sheaves and stars bowing down to him that got him tossed into an abandoned well, then sold to Midianite merchants and the story that he was “dead” circulating around the homestead by his brothers. The coat with the long sleeves was only a minor detail but it got painted with many colors and became center stage in a narrative that began in chaos and through God’s Word brought forth things beyond imagination.

Those Midianite merchants delivered Joseph safely in the land of Egypt, Egypt, the land of the Pharaoh, and of fertile soil, rich culture, pyramids, and many gods. It is in that land where Joseph’s interpretation of the Pharaoh’s dreams swept him into good favor advancing the story. Now in the 50<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Genesis, the book of beginnings, a new beginning is about to be revealed. Those pesky older brothers, who sold him to the traveling Merchants years before, saturated that special coat with the long sleeves, the one we embellish with many colors, they saturated it with the blood of a wild animal and spun a tall tale that it was Joseph’s blood and he was “dead”. Now the brothers have traveled the meandering road to Egypt themselves one last time.



This time as they make their way toward their brother Joseph, their father Jacob is dead. The generous hospitality and renewed relationship awarded them by Joseph in past visits could easily be retracted. The brothers face a new circumstance requiring new assurances. Their years of guilt and fear associated with their jealousy and their inappropriate actions (Throwing their brother in a dry well and then selling him to merchants, and fabricating his death, that is all pretty ugly stuff) those actions plagued them as they anticipate their meeting with Joseph.

It is of course, the wronged party who can break a cycle such as this. It is only the injured one who can allow forgiveness to flow forth. So when they beg Joseph to forgive their transgression and the harm they did to him. Joseph wept. His brothers fell down (just like Joseph had dreamed when he was a 17 year old boy) and they wept too. They are willing to be servants, slaves for their brother Joseph. But he calls to them *do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God meant it for good.* What? No judging, no revenge, no putting them in their place, no extreme action?

In the words of Grandma, “every dog has his day” and it seemed that this was that day for Joseph, when his brothers, the ones who treated him “ugly” fell to their knees and wept, begging for forgiveness.

His brothers had planned it for evil, while God planned it for good. Joseph’s brothers were so concerned about their own plan and plot and action that in the midst of their scheme they were unable to recognize another plan about which none of them knew, a plan hidden but sure in its work. This hidden plan was God’s. It is a Genesis of its own for relationship, and family, and tribe, and nation, and future that for so many is too vast to conceive.

Forgiveness is central. And forgiveness is God’s to give and grant and bring about. God’s forgiving love began in chaos and is brought forth in the Word. The narrative advances. Rarely do repentant perpetrators come forth. But when they do, it seems from the Genesis text that tears often accompany their fear filled lives. The Psalms and prayers of lament reflect the conviction that it is enough to trust the plan of God to refute the deathly plans of others. In God’s world, we are not helpless in the face of such schemes. The purposes of God supersede the best human plans.

In these days we are faced with new circumstance requiring new assurances. The assurances continue to come from God. God continues to weep and to forgive. And I, we continue to receive that gracious Word, Christ himself in the promise of baptism and Holy Communion. Christ Jesus breaks the old cycle of sin and death allowing for Genesis, beginnings for you and me. Beginnings do flow forth from broken deadly cycles giving life for relationships, and family, and community, and a future that for so many is beyond imagination.

Sometimes we have days that seem as though we have been tossed into a drywell or sold out by the very ones we thought cared about us. Such betrayals do come. And with them forgiveness isn’t the first thing on our minds. Getting even, settling the score, revenge looks pretty good. But this is not the way of God. It is not making a way, opening a future. Grandma Gerty with her “every dog has his day” and Pops with his don’t be “ugly” and Joseph grasping something of God’s making a way, and Jesus’ seventy-seven times move us to a place of forgiveness, reconciliation, new beginnings.

When we were kids it was the thing that allowed us to resume a softball game, get back into a huddle and work out a plan to score a touchdown. Forgiveness is God making a way even out of an abandoned well, in a foreign land, among people who sometimes treat you “ugly.” Amen.

**FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21**

[not printed]

**Psalms 103: [1-7] 8-13****SECOND READING: Romans 14:1-12**

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.

<sup>2</sup>Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

<sup>5</sup>Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.

<sup>6</sup>Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

<sup>7</sup>We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

<sup>10</sup>Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup>For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall give praise to God."

<sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35**

Peter came and said to [Jesus,] "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup>"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup>When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup>and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup>So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup>And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' <sup>29</sup>Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' <sup>30</sup>But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup>And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup>So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Next Sunday's Readings: Jonah 3:10–4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16.

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