

***Be dressed for action
and have your lamps lit***

LUKE 12:35

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

www.stpaulsyork.org

www.stpaulspreschoolyork.com

Facebook: St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George

YouTube: St. Paul's Lutheran Church - South George St. York

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 186 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 (George St). Baby changing stations are provided in these restrooms as well as in the nursery.

Our Communion is "open" to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

The Nursery is accessed through the front right double doors. The 9:15 AM liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery.

Guidelines for Worship during the time of COVID-19

Entering and Leaving the Church:

*Wearing a mask while in worship is optional, recommended or required based on the CDC guidelines. Green/Optional, Yellow/Recommended, Red/Required. **The instruction will be posted on the entry doors. Please be sure to bring a mask in the event of required/recommended masking. Disposable masks are available at the entrance to the church nave.***

Offerings:

Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave prior to the service or immediately following the service. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org

Communion Procedure:

- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle (about 10 adults per side).*
- 2. Communion glasses are placed on credence tables at the front pews (left and right side).*
- 3. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.*
- 4. Take your place along the chancel step. The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.*
- 5. Extend your hands to receive the communion host.*
- 6. Consume the communion host before you leave the chancel edge.*
- 7. Hold the communion glass with both hands at chest height so that the communion assistant can easily pour the wine into the glass.*
- 8. Consume the wine.*
- 9. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.*
- 10. Return to your pew using the side aisle.*

Our COVID-19 task force is assisting us as we remain open. Please thank Dr. Jessica Ericson, Sheridan Palmer, Deacon Harold Sargeant, Norma Shue, and Dr. Martha Thomas for their dedication and service.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, August 7, 2022
Holy Communion 9:15 AM

Musical setting 6 from Evangelical Lutheran Worship

PRELUDE *Prelude and Fugue in E minor (Cathedral)* *J. S. Bach*
Jonathan Brettschneider

Stand turning towards the font.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The assembly stands. The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Let us pray. 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.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage 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

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, 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

ENTRANCE HYMN

How Firm a Foundation (ELW 796)

Stanza 1 & 4 Unison, Stanza 2 & 3 Harmony

1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
 2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
 3 "When through fi - 'ry tri - als your path - way shall lie,
 4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove

is laid for your faith in Christ Je - sus, the Word!
 for I am your God and will still give you aid;
 my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply;
 my sov - reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;

What more can he say than to you he has said
 I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
 The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign
 and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,


who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
 up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."
 your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."
 like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

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 *Refrain sung by congregation. Verses sung by Cantor*


Refrain



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace




to God's peo-ple on earth. Glo-ry to God in the




high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



1 Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al - mighty 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.

Final refrain

Glo - ry to God in the high - est.
A - men, a - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merit of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Genesis 15:1-6

(back cover)

PSALM

Psalm 33:12-22

Spoken responsively by whole verse.

¹² Happy is the nation whose God | is the LORD!*

Happy the people he has chosen to | be his own!

¹³ **The LORD looks | down from heaven,***

and beholds all the people | in the world.

¹⁴ From where he sits enthroned he | turns his gaze*

on all who dwell | on the earth.

¹⁵ **He fashions all the | hearts of them***

and understands | all their works.

¹⁶ There is no king that can be saved by a | mighty army;*

a strong man is not delivered by | his great strength.

Continued on next page...

- 17 **The horse is a vain hope | for deliverance;***
for all its strength it | cannot save.
- 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon | those who fear him,*
 on those who wait up- | on his love,
- 19 **to pluck their | lives from death,***
and to feed them in | time of famine.
- 20 Our soul waits | for the LORD;*
 he is our help | and our shield.
- 21 **Indeed, our heart rejoic- | es in him,***
for in his holy name we | put our trust.
- 22 Let your lovingkindness, O LORD, | be upon us,*
 as we have put our | trust in you.

SECOND READING Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 (*back cover*)

Stand
VERSE



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

HOLY GOSPEL Luke 12:32-40 (*back cover*)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke **Glory to you, O Lord.**
At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sit
SERMON

Pastor Stan 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.

Almighty and everliving God; equip us to speak your word of promise and hope in the midst of fear and uncertainty. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

In places of famine, provide nourishment. In places of plenty, fashion good stewards of your bounty. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Raise up courageous leaders to govern with compassion and justice. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Look upon all who wait for your steadfast love. Console those who grieve and embrace those who cry out to you (*especially Janet Fitch, Peggy Jacobs, Carl Jacobs, Katie Guyer, Eddie Turner, Gloria Kendrick, Amy Hollis, Heidi Glaudel, Kristine Gross, Rachel Barnes, Courtney Snell*). Help us to trust your promise and not be afraid. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Strengthen the outreach ministries of this congregation (*specific ministries may be named*) and all who care for those in need. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

With thanksgiving we remember all who have died in faith and now rest in you. As they placed their hope in you, so strengthen us to trust in your promise of new life.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Receive the prayers of your children, merciful God, and hold us forever in your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The ministers and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

OFFERTORY

As the pastor prepares the altar the people sing.

Praise God from whom all bless-ings flow; praise him, all crea-tures here be-low;
praise him a - bove, ye heaven-ly host: praise Fa - ther, Son and Ho - ly Ghost.

WORDS: *Doxology*, Thomas Ken (1637-1711)
MUSIC: Louis Bourgeois (ca. 1510-1561), *Genevan Psalter*, 1551

OLD 100th
L.M.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Merciful God,

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

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

And also with you.


We lift them to the Lord.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS



Ho-ly, ho-ly, ho-ly Lord, Lord God of pow-er and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho -
san-na in the high-est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na in the high-est.

THANKSGIVING

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all your people in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen**

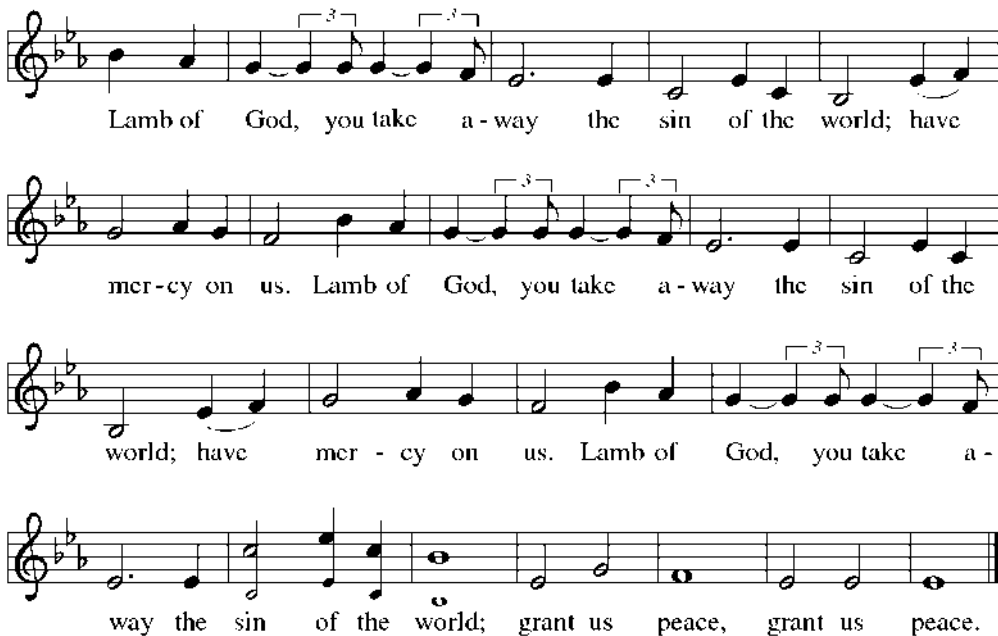
Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray...

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 *The bread is broken. A brief silence is kept.*

AGNUS DEI *sung by all*



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. Lamb of God, you take a -
way the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

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.

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; and we pray that in your mercy you would 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**

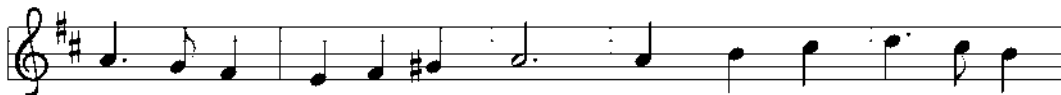
BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Bless you now and forever. **Amen**

HYMN *Great is Thy Faithfulness (ELW 733)*



1 Great is thy faith-ful-ness, O God my Fa-ther; there is no
2 Sum-mer and win-ter and spring-time and har-vest, sun, moon, and
3 Par-don for sin and a peace that en-dur-eth, thine own dear



shad-ow of turn-ing with thee; thou chang-est not, thy com-
stars in their cours-es a-bove join with all na-ture in
pres-ence to cheer and to guide; strength for to-day and bright



pas-sions they fail not; as thou hast been, thou for-ev-er wilt be.
man-i-fold wit-ness to thy great faith-ful-ness, mer-cy, and love.
hope for to-mor-row, bless-ings all mine, with ten thou-sand be-side!

Refrain



Great is thy faith-ful-ness! Great is thy faith-ful-ness! Morn-ing by



morn-ing new mer-cies I see; all I have need-ed thy



hand hath pro-vid-ed; great is thy faith-ful-ness, Lord, un-to me.

DISMISSAL

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

POSTLUDE

Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne
Jacqueline Brettschneider

Dietrich Buxtehude

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We thank Jacqueline and Jonathan Brettschneider for sharing their talents with us on the organ this morning.

The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God in memory of Richard & Margaret Martin by the Martin Family



Sunday Coffee Hour—Please contribute baked goods, fruits or veggies for Fellowship following our Summer 9:15 AM services. Simply notify the church office or sign up in the Good Shepherd room to be added to the schedule. The desire is to have fellowship opportunities following worship each Sunday throughout the summer. A member of the Fellowship Committee will provide oversight for each gathering.

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open 7:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. Mon—Thurs

Sunday, August 7

9:15 AM Holy Eucharist
10:15 AM Fellowship—Good Shepherd Rm
10:30 AM Assembly Backpacks for Food Pantry
Clients with school age children—Christ Hall
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Tuesday, August 9

9:30 AM Pantry

Saturday, August 13

8:00 AM Council & Chairperson Mid-year Retreat

Sunday, August 14

9:15 AM Holy Eucharist
10:15 AM Fellowship—Good Shepherd Rm
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm
7:00 PM Nominations Committee—ZOOM

Serving the Lord with Gladness

| DATE | TIME | Assisting Minister | Crucifer | Lector | Communion Assistants | Greeters | Ushers | Altar Set-up & Altar Clean-up |
|------|---------|--------------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 8/7 | 9:15 AM | Tony Culp | Tanner Culp | Ann Ulrich | Deb & Larry Becker | Kathy & Tom Ruth | Jeff Riese , John Monk, Dave Kopp, Sandy Dickensheets | Sandy Dickensheets, Tonya Cave |

Prayerful consideration needed for Congregation Treasurer. Interim Treasurer, Peter O’Conor is bringing those duties to a close with completion of the 2021 audit (August 31). The duties associated with the treasurer’s position have been greatly clarified during the past several years. If you are willing to consider this ministry opportunity or would like more information, please speak to President Tristan Ericson or Pastor Reep.

The Nominating Committee is beginning its work to secure persons willing to serve on Congregation Council, Benevolence Committee, Mutual Ministry Committee, and Voting Members to the Synod Assembly. We’ll soon look for candidates to serve on these elected positions. Elections take place at our Annual Meeting in November and terms begin the following calendar year. We will hold two 30-minute informational ZOOM meetings August 14 and 17 to explain what it’s like to serve in these positions. Each meeting will present the same information, so those interested need only participate in one ZOOM session and this does not commit you any further! Please connect to learn more about St. Paul’s leadership. Contact Council President, Tristan Ericson, or Kathryn Wicker directly to express interest or to sign up for the ZOOM link.

Preschool Webpage—We are excited to let everyone know that St. Paul's Preschool has a new webpage (stpaulspreschoolyork.com). Please take a few minutes to check it out and share it with people you know who may have children 2, 3, or 4 years of age. Applications for 2022-2023 enrollment are being accepted now.

Confirmation instruction will begin in September and will be held on Sunday morning. Students entering the 7th Grade should be enrolled in the program. Please contact Pastor Reep for additional information.

Grades 4-6 Youth Group –TODAY Sunday, August 7—3:00 pm
Mini Golf and Ice Cream—Jim Mack’s Mini Golf and Ice Cream
5745 Lincoln Highway, York, PA 17406

Parents you are welcome to stay and golf. Following mini golfing I would like to have a short meeting with youth and parents about upcoming events that are planned for the year. Miss Kelly
Next Sunday...Grades 7-12

Family Ministry - Picnic in the Park, August 16th, 5:30pm – 7:00pm
Kain Park, Perch Pavilion
God Creates the Creatures in the Sea

Join your friends from St. Paul’s for an evening picnic and bible activities at one of York Counties local parks. Each family is asked to bring their own picnic dinner to enjoy as we gather. The evening will include an interactive bible story and craft. All pavilions are located close to the park playground so your children can enjoy time playing with their friends. Restrooms and parking are located within walking distance.

5:30 – Picnic 6:00 – 7:00 – Bible Story and Craft



Food Pantry—August

Items needed: Rice (1 or 2 lb bags), dehydrated potatoes, powdered milk, tomato sauce and soup. We also need paper grocery bags with handles.

Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh, Patty Snyder, 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”.

Help Needed-Handbell Polishing Party!

In order to keep our bells in great shape for years to come, they are in need of polishing. It is not a difficult task, but with over 60 bells, many hands are needed to lighten the work! If you are willing to donate your time and elbow grease, please join us for a polishing party on Thursday, August 18 at 6:30 PM. All supplies, training, and great conversation will be provided! Please wear older clothes that can get dirty, as the polish can stain fabrics. We appreciate your help in maintaining our beautiful instruments!

Sunday School Begins on September 11 with the God’s Work Our Hands project. Regular classes start on September 18 at 9:15 AM.

Harvest Dinner Tickets are on sale. The dinner will be held on October 8, 2022. Proceeds benefit the Food Pantry. This year will feature select regional wines and local microbrews paired with the menu. Contact the office for tickets.

Altar Flowers sponsors are needed. Please check out the Springettsbury Hallway bulletin board for the sign-up sheet and available dates for the year. Cost is \$30 per vase.

Ukraine Offering—Offerings to give aid to Ukrainian refugees, orphans, widows and humanitarian help can be given through St. Paul’s website www.stpaulsyork.org by selecting the designated button or through our pew envelopes marking them “Ukraine”.

| STAFF | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pastor | Rev. Stanley Reep | orreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Youth Director | Kelly Moore-Spencer | kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Organist, Choir Director | Victor Fields | vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Bell Choirs Director | Leah McComas | lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com |
| Secretary | Patee Pizzirusso | st.paulsyork@comcast.net |
| Sexton | Ted Weikert | st.paulsyork@comcast.net |
| Preschool Director | Deb Becker | director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com |

The dock is central to Lake Week. And Lake Week is central to my wellbeing. Lake Week occurs the last week of July. It has been that way for over 30 years. Our best friends invite us to spend a week with them, at a simple rather primitive cottage, on a pristine lake. The dock serves as the compass point for that period of time. It is the place from which the row boat, canoe, and paddleboards are launched. It is the place from which shrieks of delight are heard as children and adults jump off of the diving board into the crystal clear water. And as you may expect, the shrieks are more pronounced when the water temperate is drastically colder than anticipated! The dock provides the stable footing needed when casting a line and lure into the water to catch fish early in the morning or in the early evening light. And it serves as a backdrop for an untold number of photographs. At the lake the dock is the command center for cumulative joyful summer memories with family and friends.

With the setting of the sun, the dock serves as a bridge between the surface of the water and the night sky. With unobstructed views stars appear overhead revealing constellations in the heavens above. The Big Dipper, the band of Orion's Belt, Polaris and the Little Dipper, all twinkling in a field of midnight blue as if drawn by candle light. Identifying constellations is like unwrapping packages from under the Christmas tree. Excitement, awe, wonder, expectation, a first glimpse and then the full impact of generosity, joy, and thanksgiving it overwhelms me as I stand on the dock gazing up at the night-time sky.

Abram was brought out into the night sky. ***God said to him "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be."*** Excitement, awe, wonder, expectation, a first glimpse and then the full impact of generosity, joy, and thanksgiving, ***And Abram believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.*** Such was the affirmation from an old man with a wife who was barren. I am not sure if Abram actually began to count one by one pointing at each star, or grouping them together in chunks from the vast expansive universe. But I do know that a fearful old man had his life transformed, had hope restored.

The story of course includes a detour with Abram not heeding the Word of the Lord, but heeding his wife Sarai who thought that time was running out and that they should try and help God out a bit. (How many of us think that we need to help God out from time to time? The Frank Sinatra hit always comes to mind "I did it my way!") That didn't work out so well for Abram and Sarai. She recommends gaining an heir through a different means than through the promise made to Abram that night under the star lit sky. When Sarai's plan fails leading to jealousy and sorrow, God visits them.

Now Abram nearly 100 years old and Sarai nearly 90 hear God announcing a timeframe different from their own. God assured Abram that death was not the end of the line for the two elderly followers. Faithfulness, waiting and trusting, in the end would win out and they would have a child, an heir, their very own offspring; a son. And in that moment God changed their names forever to be known as Abraham and Sarah. ***She will give rise to nations; kings and of peoples shall come from her who would be named Isaac.*** Later, nine months or so after laughing about an old couple becoming parents, Sarah gave birth to a son. They named him Isaac.

A next generation was not only desired but was required in the ancient world. Without the next generation it would be the end of the line, the end of a promise, the end of blessing for others, the end of hopes and dreams. As the story unfolds in the book of Genesis it is belief that mattered. Abraham and Sarah's impatience, or lack of trust, or desire to do it their own way, did not thwart God's time. Abraham believed God. God did what God said he would do making a way forward even at an advanced age.

Maybe you have come to a place in your life like that? A place where it seems that there isn't a way forward and that you have come to the end of the line, and with that thought, hopes and dreams are squelched. If you are secretly saying "yes I have," then take comfort knowing that you are not alone. Christian people have meandered down that road often enough that the New Testament writers have taken up the topic as a way to visit us with an assuring Word. This Word comes to us making a way by securing our footing, centering our lives, launching out with renewed purpose, hearing a forgiving word freeing us for joyful living. Christ Jesus, the Child of Christmas, the Word, comes to us. He comes among us to right wrongs, making a way for faithful living, bridging all that separates us from God. With him there is excitement, awe, wonder, expectation, generosity, joy, and thanksgiving associated with life. He makes a way restoring hopes and dreams and promising eternal life. Christ is central to faith. Faith is central to well-being. Christ is the compass point for centering our lives of faith; our going out and our coming in, our shrieks of joy and delight and our shrieks of lament in times of sorrow. Christ provides a stable footing as we proclaim love in words and in acts of kindness.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen. Faith it seems is not immediate. We only have to think back on Abraham. Faith doesn't seem to keep pace with the speed at which our fatigued culture moves. Faith has always found itself swirling around in an environment dominated by immediate gratification. We only have to think back on Sarah. The fast paced forces advancing a culture of instant delight continues to gain traction and imbed itself in our culture. Most days with the impatience, or lack of trust, or desire to do it our own way, it is almost impossible to imagine something different, something other, something lodged deep within God's time. And at just such a time Christ comes reminding us of his promise to us through Baptism's water and word and communion's bread and wine. And like Abraham, we believe.

Standing on the dock, bridging water surface and night sky, viewing the vastness of the created order I marvel at the expanse, the beauty, the stillness, and the quiet. As a Christian it is the Bright Morning Star, Christ Jesus, who promises us life and a future that is unimaginable. Like Abraham I believe God. And like Abraham it is easy for me to get pulled in a different direction. On July 12 the first images were revealed from the Webb Telescope. The clarity, color, and sheer magnitude of the photographs were overwhelming for viewers and it didn't matter if they were professionals studying in the field or novices like me who on occasion gaze heavenward attempting to draw pictures in the night sky by connecting starlight. The images peaked curiosity and engaged imagination. For some they renewed hope and for others provided an opportunity to dream. Long ago when God brought Abraham outside and said "**look toward the heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them.**" God promised an old man a future that was unimaginable. And Abraham believed God. Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 15:1-6

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

²But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." ⁴But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." ⁵He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Psalm 33:12-22**SECOND READING: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one person, and this one as

good as dead, descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore."

¹³All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, ¹⁴for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

GOSPEL: Luke 12:32-40

[Jesus said:] "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

³⁹"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Next Sunday's Readings: Jeremiah 23:23-29; Psalm 82; Hebrews 11:29–12:2; Luke 12:49-56.

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