

# Be reconciled

MATTHEW 5:24



# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

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

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

**Postlude** It is our tradition to remain seated for the postlude. If you need to leave we ask that you do so reverently. This tradition developed as a result of our livestream. We want anyone viewing to be able to listen to the postlude without unnecessary distraction. Thank you.

**Offerings** Monetary offerings may be placed in the basins provided at the entrances to the nave prior to the service. You may also donate via our website at [www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org)

**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.

**The Nursery** is accessed through the front right double doors. The 10:30AM liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Currently, we are working to secure volunteer staff for the Nursery. Carrie Oberholtzer is coordinating a schedule. Please contact the office to volunteer.

*Today's Altar Flowers are presented to the Glory of God in honor of Ruthe & William Nason, and Ebba & Nils Schedin by Steve & Julie Schedin.*

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You may get information regarding closures at our website [www.stpaulsyork.org](http://www.stpaulsyork.org) or on our Facebook page St. Paul's Lutheran Church York PA on Springettsbury & George.

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

*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.***

**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.



**6th Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Sunday, February 12, 2023**  
**Holy Communion 8:00 AM & 10:30AM**

**PRELUDE**

*Jacob's Ladder*

Ralph Simpson

*Stand Turning to face the Baptismal font.*

**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.**

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**

**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.**

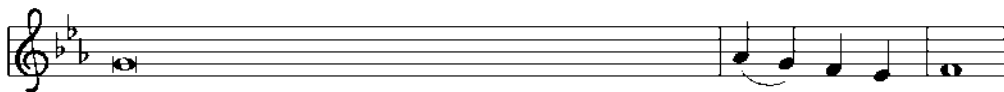
**KYRIE**



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



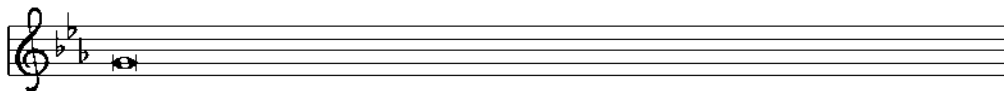
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



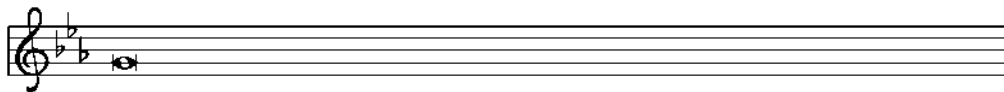
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

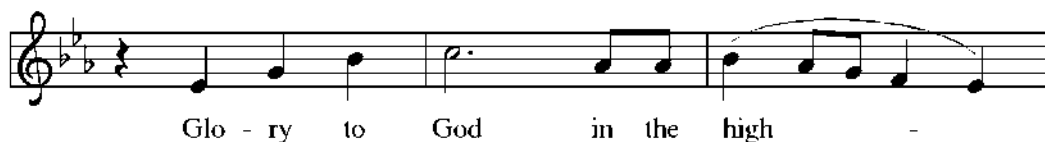


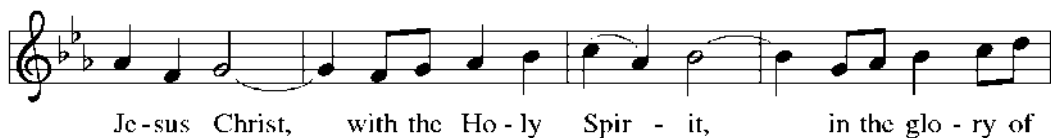
Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

## HYMN OF PRAISE





## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Lord God, mercifully receive the prayers of your people. Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us grace and power to do them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*Sit*

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

## FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 *(back cover)*

## PSALMODY

Psalm 119:1-8 *(spoken responsively by whole verse)*

- <sup>1</sup> Happy are they whose | way is blameless,\*  
who walk in the law | of the LORD!
- <sup>2</sup> **Happy are they who observe | his decrees\***  
**and seek him with | all their hearts!**
- <sup>3</sup> Who never do | any wrong,\*  
but always walk | in his ways.
- <sup>4</sup> **You laid down | your commandments,\***  
**that we should | fully keep them.**
- <sup>5</sup> Oh, that my ways were made | so direct\*  
that I might | keep your statutes!
- <sup>6</sup> **Then I should not be | put to shame,\***  
**when I regard all | your commandments.**
- <sup>7</sup> I will thank you with an | unfeigned heart,\*  
when I have learned your | righteous judgments.
- <sup>8</sup> **I will | keep your statutes;\***  
**do not utter- | ly forsake me.**

## SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 3:1-9 *(back cover)*

*Stand*

VERSE

*Sung by all*

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

*Repeat alleluia*

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

## HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 5:21-37

*(back cover)*

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the conclusion of the Gospel.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Sit*

SERMON

Rev. Stan Reep

*Stand*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive (ELW 605)*



- 1 "For - give our sins as we for - give," you taught us, Lord, to pray;
- 2 How can your par - don reach and bless the un - for - giv - ing heart
- 3 In blaz - ing light your cross re - veals the truth we dim - ly knew;
- 4 Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls and bid re - sent - ment cease;



but you a - lone can grant us grace to live the words we say.  
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bit - ter - ness de - part?  
how tri - fling oth - ers' debts to us; how great our debt to you!  
then, by your mer - cy rec - on - ciled, our lives will spread your peace.

**APOSTLES' 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.*



Lord God, let your mind shape us so that we may reflect your loving purpose throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all experience abundant life in your ways. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Bless the work of farmers; provide for farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward sustainable ways to feed the world. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible, empower peacemakers with your word to love even our enemies. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, and hunger, equip relief workers to bring signs of hope. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Nurture all in need (*Especially we pray for Susan Knaub, Jennifer Garretson, Amy Bush, Lisa Rosende, Joe Triggs, Shirley Thornton, Nancy Smith, Marc Mione, Mindy Cook & infant son Winston, Joan Langheine, Krista Troxell, Maria Laczkoskie, Mary Buler, Marcie Walker, Bonnie Schmidt, Gary Bilbie, Erin Bastian, Harry Harman, Katie Guyer, Amy Hollis, Heidi Claudel, Kristine Gross, Rachel Barnes, and Courtney Snell*). Bring healing to all who experience trauma caused by systems of injustice and destructive relationships. Give courage to those struggling to repent and those seeking reconciliation. Sustain all who work for restoration (*local restorative efforts may be named*). Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Encourage our congregation. Call us to a common purpose and keep us from quarrelling. Turn our hearts toward you and guide our leaders, so that our decisions and choices may be lifegiving for all. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Thanks be to you for the lives of all who have died in Christ. Teach us to follow them in your ways and gather us with them into the promise of eternal life with you. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed 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.*

*Sit*

**OFFERTORY ANTHEM 10:30 AM**

Chancel Choir

*O, For a Closer Walk*

C.V. Stanford

*Stand*  
**DOXOLOGY**



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.

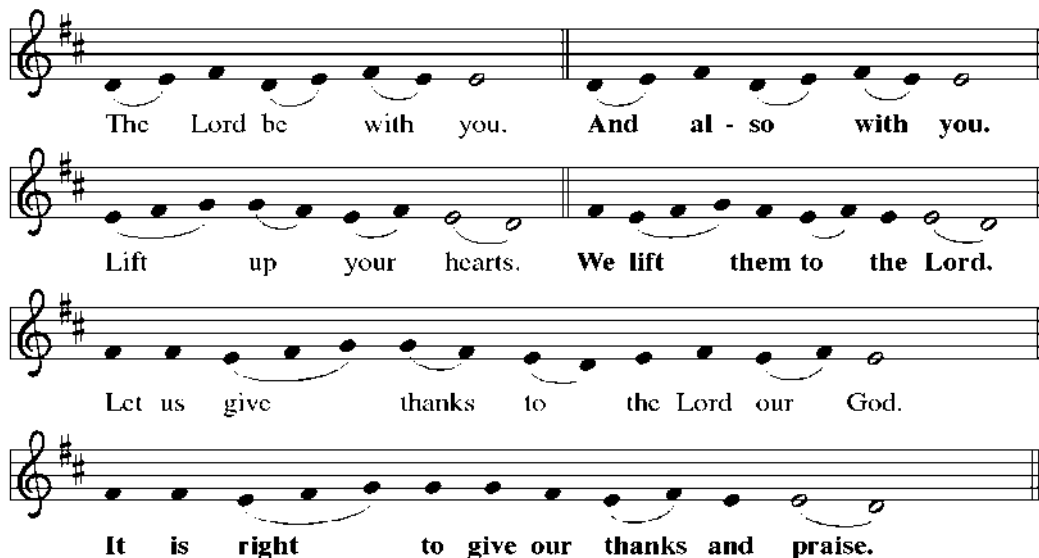
WORDS: *Doxology*, Thomas Ken (1637-1711)  
MUSIC: Louis Bourgeois (ca. 1510-1561), *Genevan Psalter*, 1551

OLD 100th  
L.M.

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray. Merciful Father,  
**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**

**DIALOGUE**      *Sung by Pastor and congregation*

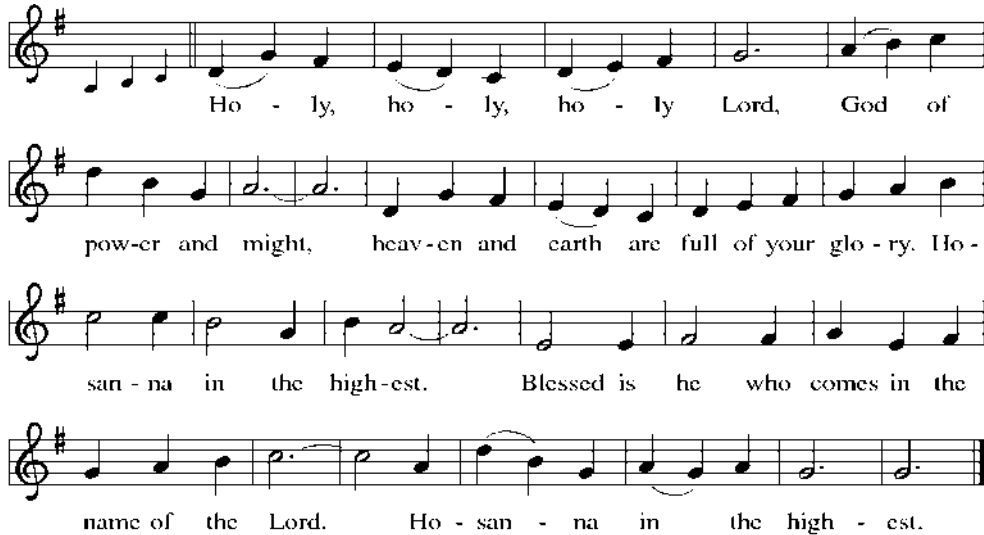


The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations; in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son; and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## **SANCTUS**     *Sung by all.*



## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life; heaven and earth are full of your glory. Through Abraham you promised to bless all nations.

You rescued Israel, your chosen people.

Through the prophets you renewed your promise; and, at this end of all the ages, you sent your Son, who in words and deeds proclaimed your kingdom and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore, gracious Father, with this bread and cup we remember the life our Lord offered for us. And, believing the witness of his resurrection, we await his coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit, the spirit of our Lord and of his resurrection, that we who receive the Lord's body and blood may live to the praise of your glory and receive our inheritance with all your saints in light.

**Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

Join our prayers with those of your servants of every time and every place, and unite them with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest until he comes as victorious Lord of all.

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

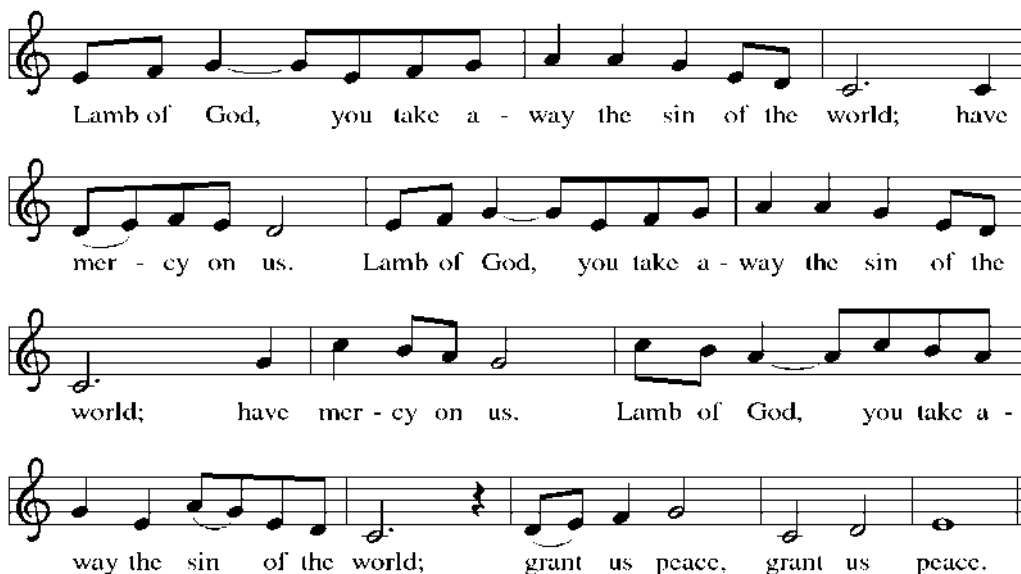
Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

## 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 RITE** *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**

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

- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle.*
- 2. Communion glasses are placed on credence tables at the front pews.*
- 3. Take a communion glass from the tray.*
- 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.*
- 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 before you leave the chancel edge.*
- 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.*

**COMMUNION HYMN**    *Look Who Gathers at Christ’s Table (ACS 977) next page*

**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.**

## **BLESSING**

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

**HYMN**            *O Christ, Our Hope (ELW 604) following pages*

## **DISMISSAL**

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

## **POSTLUDE**

*Someone’s Singing, Lord*

John A. Behnke

## Look Who Gathers at Christ's Table



1 Look who gath - ers at Christ's ta - ble! Hear the sto - ries  
2 Clouds of light sur - round the ta - ble; an - cient fol - low -  
3 Their sad sto - ries are re - peat - ed in a thou - sand  
4 Bring your joy and bring your sad - ness, and pre - pare to



that they bring. Some are weep - ing; some are laugh - ing;  
ers ap - pear, saints con - fess - ing how they wres - tled  
dif - f'rent ways, but they share one thing in com - mon:  
be sur - prised by the host whose hands are wound - ed,



some have songs they want to sing. Oth - ers ask why they're in -  
with their guilt, their doubt and fear. Pe - ter tells of his de -  
they all end in thanks and praise for the host who has in -  
who will o - pen wide your eyes when he bless - es bread and



vit - ed, bur - dened by the wrong they've done. Christ in - sists they  
ny - ing Christ was ev - er in his sight; Paul re - lates his  
vit - ed north and south and east and west to con - verge a -  
breaks it— truth and man - na from a - bove!— and then pass - es



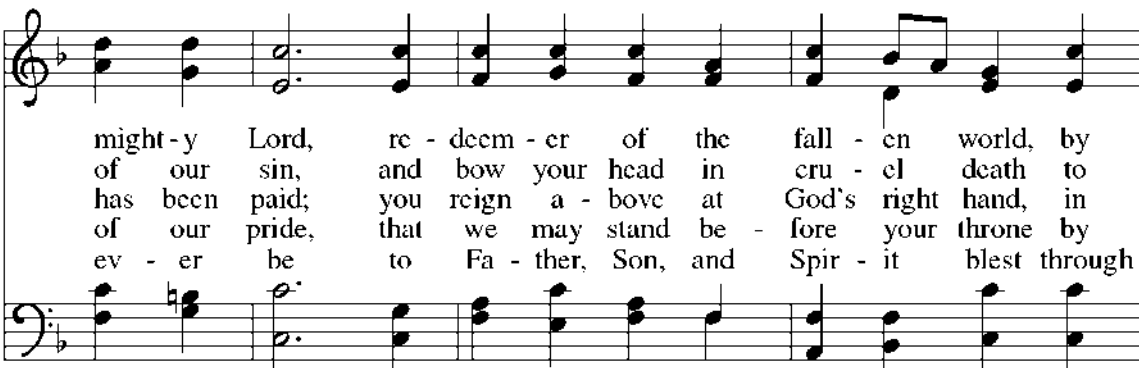
all are wel - come. There is room for ev - 'ry - one.  
fruit - less ef - forts to ob - lit - er - ate the light.  
round this ta - ble, where all life is fed and blest.  
wine that wa - kens in your heart the taste of love.



# O Christ, Our Hope



1 O Christ, our hope, our hearts' de - sire, cre - a - tion's  
2 How vast your mer - cy to ac - cept the bur - den  
3 But now the bonds of death are burst, the ran - som  
4 Oh, let your might - y love pre - vail to purge us  
5 All praise to you, as - cend - ed Lord; all glo - ry



might - y Lord, re - deem - er of the fall - en world, by  
of our sin, and bow your head in cru - el death to  
has been paid; you reign a - bove at God's right hand, in  
of our pride, that we may stand be - fore your throne by  
ev - er be to Fa - ther, Son, and Spir - it blest through



ho - ly love out - poured, by ho - ly love out - poured:  
make us clean with - in, to make us clean with - in.  
robes of light ar - rayed, in robes of light ar - rayed.  
mer - cy pu - ri - fied, by mer - cy pu - ri - fied.  
all e - ter - ni - ty, through all e - ter - ni - ty!

## News and Updates February 12, 2023

**Many thanks to the children** for making and handing out Valentine themed bookmarks this morning prior to the 10:30 AM liturgy. They were created during the Tuesday evening CREATE youth ministry program. A special “thank you” to Miss Kelly for her leadership and devotion to the children and families of St. Paul’s.

**Second Sunday Fellowship** will be held in the Good Shepherd Room following the 10:30 AM liturgy. This time provides opportunity to get acquainted with those who are visiting with us, those preparing for membership and renewal of our many friendships. Please join us this morning.

**This afternoon The York County Honors Choir** will present a program of choral works under the direction of Carlos Casilla. The performance is at 3:00 PM in the church nave.

**Ash Wednesday Services—Wednesday, February 22nd at 11 AM and 7 PM.** A Senior’s Luncheon will follow the 11 AM service. Please contact the office if you would like to attend the luncheon or sign up on the clipboard passed through the pews during announcements this morning.

**A Senior Members Luncheon** will be held Ash Wednesday sponsored by the Witness Committee. Ash Wednesday liturgy will be held at 11:00 AM with the luncheon to follow in Christ Hall. The Committee will need assistance in providing transportation for several of our homebound members. Please contact Earline Jones if you can assist.

**First meeting for traveling to Tanzania** to our sister congregation in June of 2024 was held on Wednesday, January 18. If you are interested but couldn’t attend the meeting please contact Pastor Tom McKee.

**A New Members Class** will be conducted during the 5 Sundays of Lent, Feb. 26-March 26, at 9:15 AM in the Lower Level Community Room. Pastor Reep will lead the class.

**Flower Chart** The 2023 flower chart is posted on the Springettsbury vestibule bulletin board. The cost of the flowers is **\$35 per vase**

**Adult Sunday Education 9:15 AM Christ Hall—**”Who Do You Say That I Am?” Join us as we discuss “The Name Above All Names”, “Images of the Living God”, and “Called to Confess Christ”.

**The Benevolence Committee** - Applications for Benevolence funding are available at the entrances to the church nave and are printed on green paper. The committee has extended the due date through May to encourage more activity. Mike Bingham serves as chairperson and Lauren Smith as secretary. Additional members are William Snyder, Kirsten Barnes and Pastor Reep.

**Members of the Property Committee** met with Christopher Peters from Marotta/Main architectural firm to discuss and begin first draft plans for a covering over the Pantry walk and ramp.

### Food Pantry—February

**Items needed:** CANNED FRUIT, Rice, beans, Tomato sauce, pasta, mashed potato mix, gravy and stuffing mix for the holidays. We also need paper grocery bags with handles and plastic bags. Anyone able to help can contact Teresa Rohrbaugh, Patty Snyder, or Janet and Larry Moore. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a “special” envelope marked “Pantry”.

**This Week at St. Paul's**  
Church office open Mon–Thurs 7:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

**Sunday, February 12**

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist  
9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages  
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist  
11:30 AM Second Sunday Fellowship  
3:00 PM York County Sr. Honors Choir Concert  
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

**Monday, February 13**

9-12 Noon Preschool Donut Fundraiser Pick-up  
7:00 PM Council Meeting—Anstadt Home

**Tuesday, February 14**

9:00 AM Conference Clergy Meeting—  
Christ Hall  
9:30 AM Pantry  
6:00 PM CREATE—Art, Crafts and Music for  
Children age 3 through grade 6

**Wednesday, February 15**

10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave  
10:30 AM Scripture Study  
11:30 AM Mpuguso Mtg

**Thursday, February 16**

10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave  
10:30 AM Sabbatical Mtg  
6:30 PM Handbell Choir  
7:30 PM Chancel Choir

**Friday, February 17**

No preschool—President's Weekend

**Sunday, February 19**

**Transfiguration**

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist

*Serving the Lord with Gladness*

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Comm. Assist	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Altar Clean-up
02/12	8:00 AM	Bob Reed	Denise Rider	Laura Livingston		Kathy & John Monk	Bob Reed, Norma Shue, Ken Hinkle	Melissa Yakim
02/12	10:30 AM	Larry Moore	Larry Becker	Earline Jones	Deb Becker	Jim & Nancy Bennett	Dave Kopp, Dan Mays, Sandy Dickensheets, *Steve Heistand	Ann Anstadt, Sandy Dickensheets

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@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
Children's Choir Director	Julianna Jones	Jjones.stpaulsyork@gmail.com
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Sexton	Ted Weikert	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	presch.stpaulsyork@comcast.net

## Epiphany 6 A, 2023B

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5:21-37

The world's most remarkable date palm trees might not exist if Sarah Sallon hadn't gotten sick while working as a doctor in India in 1986. Antibiotics didn't help. What cured here, she thinks, were some traditional herbal remedies.

"It was just amazing" said Dr. Sarah. And then she got very interested in the traditional herbal remedies. There's nothing quite like a doctor cured of their problem to get them interested in something. When she moved back home to Israel, to her job at the Medical Center in Jerusalem, she went looking for medicinal plants. And she found lots of them. But she also heard about ancient medicinal plants that had disappeared.

"They're just historical ghosts," she said. "Like the famous date plantations along the Dead Sea, 2,000 years ago — described by Pliny; described by Josephus, the first-century historian. They're not there anymore. They just vanished!"

Dr. Sarah discovered that seeds from those trees still existed. They'd been recovered from archaeological sites. She went to the archaeologists and proposed planting some of the seeds to see if they'd grow again. It didn't go well at first. They thought she was foolish! They didn't think that such a thing was even conceivable. But she kept pushing, and eventually persuaded a few of the archaeologists to provide some seeds so that she could give it a try. Nearly 15 years ago, Dr. Sarah and Elaine Solowey, a researcher at the Institute of Environmental Studies, planted some of those ancient palm seeds. And low and behold after about six weeks little green shoots appeared!

One tree grew. They named it Methuselah. But Methuselah had a problem.

Date trees are either male or female; each tree makes either pollen or fertile flowers. It takes both to produce fruit. So Methuselah by himself couldn't re-create those sweet tasting ancient dates. But then Dr. Sarah found another archaeologist who had recovered a whole trove of date seeds from Qumran, where the ancient texts known as the Dead Sea scrolls had been discovered. She planted some of those seeds and they too began to grow.

In early 2021 Dr. Sarah and her colleagues announced that they'd grown another six trees from some of those ancient seeds. Two of them were female. You could say that they found Methuselah a wife! Researchers took pollen from Methuselah, fertilized the flowers from the newly sprouting trees and waited for fruit to form: dates just like the ones that people in the Bible ate. According to ancient writers, these dates "were known for their wonderful sweetness, their very large size, and their ability to be stored for a long time, so they actually were exported around the Roman Empire." Now they live again thanks to Dr. Sarah's insights and persistence. Dr. Sarah takes this as a sign of hope for the world.

From my point of view these things from ancient times being brought into the present in a whole new way and offering hope and a new way of life, date palm trees living again, makes me think of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount where he talks about ancient times.

He takes what is ancient and reshapes it. He plants it again in a new time and a new place. He does it so that new fruit is born. Not the anger that leads to killing and the death of humanity. Not the lust that kills relationships. Not the divorce that leaves women destitute. Not the oaths that lead away from God. But with all of these Jesus desires us to bring about life, new life, life that blossom and flourishes. Jesus is about life that brings sweetness; like the date palm trees that once lined the shores of the Dead Sea.

“You have heard it said in ancient times” is Jesus digging deep into the recesses of our cultural past and replanting seeds so that they are life giving. Jesus’ words may sound harsh to us, especially if we are the angry, lustful, greedy, unfaithful ones. He doesn’t want such sickness to permeate our existence. He is preaching and teaching and planting seeds that will restore us to God. The God who in ancient times told Adam and Eve so clearly what is life giving and what is not. The God who in ancient times told Moses so clearly what is life giving and what is not.

“Ancient times” can make it seem that we don’t need to pay any attention. That we are so far removed from another time that the present is ours to undertake as we wish. “Ancient times” sounds primitive, unsophisticated, antiquated, and quaint. What do such times have to do with me, with us? And yet Dr. Sarah in her quest for health, sought out the seeds from “ancient times” to bring about wellness, wholeness, health.

We live in a time where anger is prevalent on nearly all fronts. There is anger in the nation, in the community, in our neighborhoods, anger within congregations. There is anger in the political realm over lack of shared vision, an unwillingness to work collaboratively toward any kind of consensus. There is anger over; taxes, corrupt officials, governmental agencies, greed, prejudice, apathy, and jealousy.

Jesus wants the ancient message, the seed that God planted generations before, to bring life and hope. He doesn’t want the anger that permeates our environment to kill us. He wants us to have life, to blossom, to bear fruit, to live life fully remembering the past, but allowing his presence to reshape life; your life and mine. Such life is possible through the planting of the tree of the cross on Calvary and the sacrificial love of Jesus made known through his suffering, death and resurrection for humankind. This love born from the tree of the cross provides forgiveness and wholeness for the world.

Dr. Sarah knew that from those ancient seeds being planted something bigger, something could sprout and grow, it could bring about flowers, blossoms, and an abundance of sweet fruit. Such life giving fruit could be exported around the world. Fruit from Bible times providing health and wholeness for the world.

Jesus calls us to remember the “ancient” so that the present is shaped by it. Jesus tells us of those things that move us from where we are to where God is. Come hold out your hands and receive what our ancestors in faith received, the body and blood of Christ. In the palm of your hand is placed reconciling love in the franticness of daily life; reconciling love moving you from anger and the things that kill and stifle to things that build up and transform life. Because Jesus wants you to; sprout and grow and blossom, and bear sweet delicious fruit. And through him you will be a sign of hope for the world. Amen.

**FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

[Moses said to the people:] See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

or Sirach 15:15-20 [not printed]

**Psalms 119:1-8****SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, <sup>3</sup>for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup>So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup>The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. <sup>9</sup>For we are

God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 5:21-37**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

<sup>27</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup>But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

<sup>31</sup>"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup>But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup>"Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' <sup>34</sup>But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup>or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup>And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2 or Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9.

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Tracks 1 and 2  
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