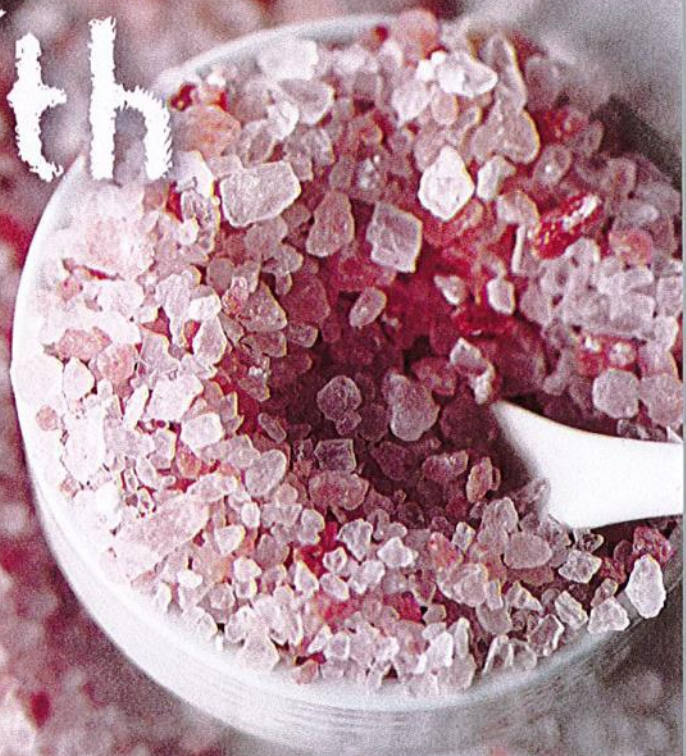


You are the Salt of the earth

MATTHEW 5:13



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.

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

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 by Jim Mummert
and in honor of our mother, Vada Egger on her birthday
by Teresa Rohrbaugh and family*

**INCLEMENT
WEATHER
INFORMATION**



You may get information regarding closures at our website 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.

5th Sunday after Epiphany
Sunday, February 5, 2023
Holy Communion 8:00 AM & 10:30AM

PRELUDE

This Little Light of Mine

Charles Callahan

Stand

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.

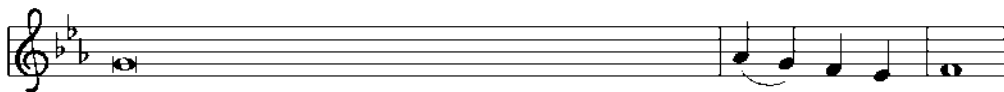
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



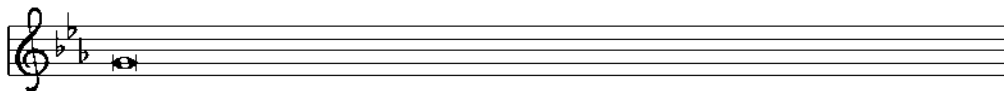
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



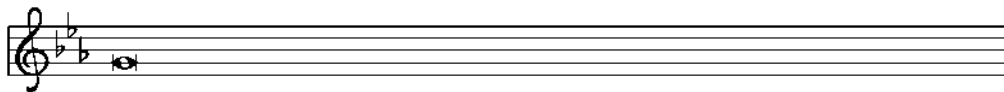
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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.

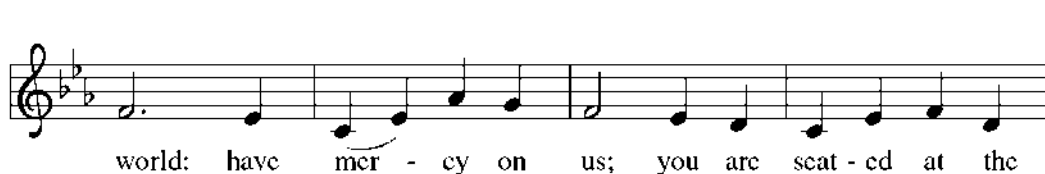
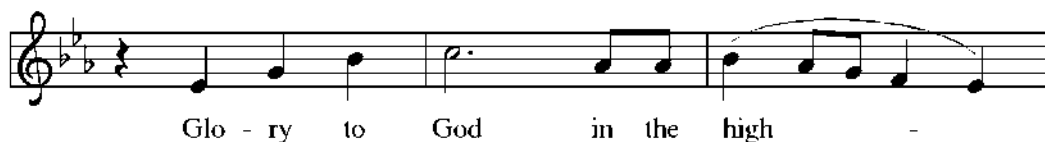


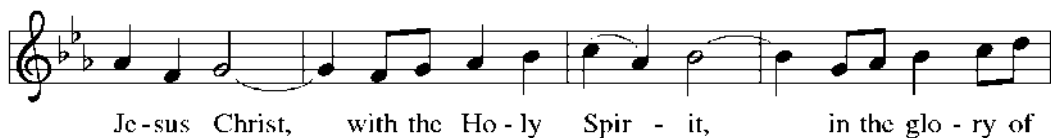
Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

HYMN OF PRAISE





PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty God, you sent your only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Help us to believe with joy what the Scriptures proclaim, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Isaiah 58:1-9a

¹Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

³"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. .

ANTHEM 10:30 AM

Chancel Choir

God of Light

Zvonimir Nagy

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 *(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 5:13-20

(back cover)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sit

SERMON

Rev. Stan Reep

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

O God of Light (ELW 507)



1 O God of light, your word, a lamp un - fail - ing,
2 From days of old, through blind and will - ful a - ges,
3 Un - dimmed by time, those words are still re - veal - ing,
4 To all the world your sum - mons you are send - ing,



shall pierce the dark - ness of our earth - bound way
though we re - belled, you gent - ly sought a - gain,
to sin - ful hearts your jus - tice and your grace;
through all the earth, to ev - 'ry land and race,



and show your grace, your plan for us un - veil - ing,
and spoke through saints, a - pos - tles, proph - ets, sa - ges,
and quest - ing spir - its, long - ing for your heal - ing,
that myr - iad tongues, in one great an - them blend - ing,



and guide our foot - steps to the per - feet day.
who wrote with ea - ger or re - luc - tant pen.
see your com - pas - sion in the Sav - ior's face.
may praise and cel - e - brate your gift of grace.

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.*

O Lord God, forgive us for the ways we have tolerated and practiced injustice and strengthen us for acting justly, loving kindness, and walking humbly with you. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Bring healing to lands and communities experiencing natural disasters. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Instruct the powerful in your ways. Provide upright leadership in business and industry so that workers are not oppressed. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Loosen the bonds of injustice in our midst. Grant peace to endless quarrels, put an end to hunger, and break every yoke of oppression. Shelter all who flee abuse in their homes or violence in their communities. Satisfy those afflicted in any way. (*Especially we pray for 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*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Shape us with your generous love to be salt and light for the earth. Give us delight in your commandments. Make us steadfast in our trust in you, ready with tangible mercy and compassion for our neighbors. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We praise you for all who have died in the faith. Keep them in our remembrance and bring us with them into the kingdom of heaven. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

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

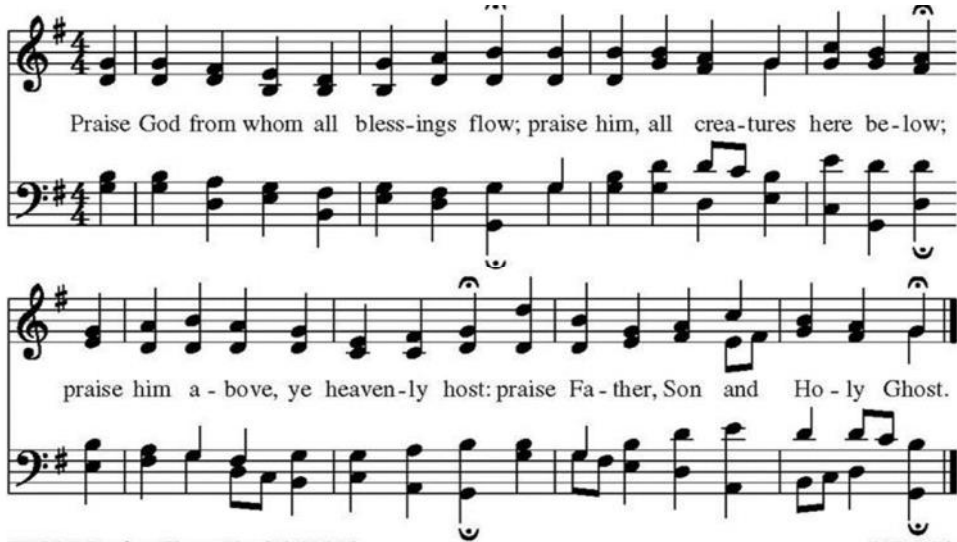
Handbells

Glory to God, Peruvian Hymn

arr. Patricia Hurlbutt

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.

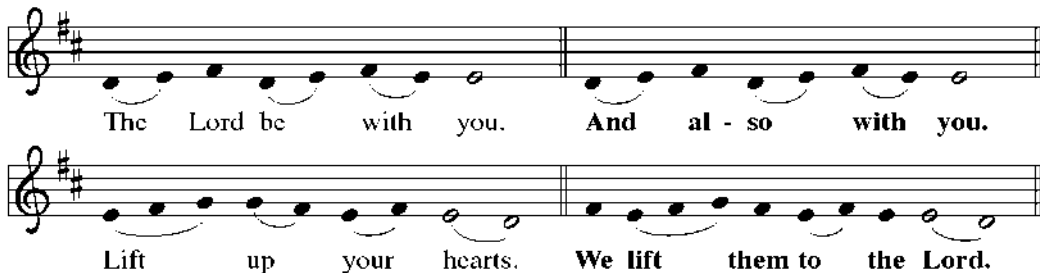
OFFERTORY PRAYER

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

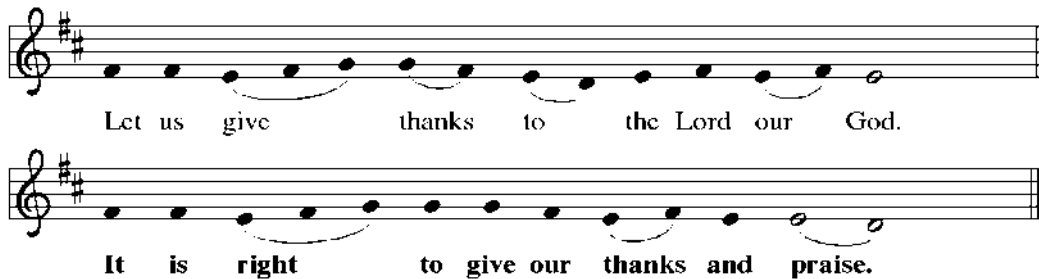
DIALOGUE

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.

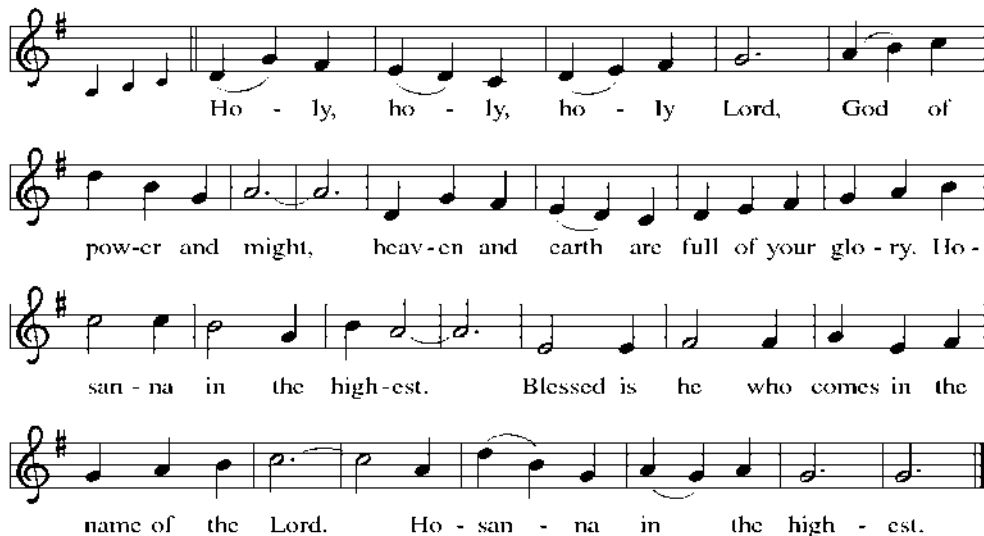
Continued on next page...



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.



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 (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.*
- 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*



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.

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

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

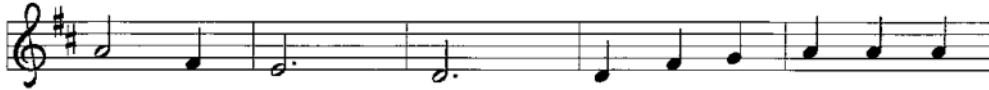
Almighty God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Bless you now and forever. **Amen**

HYMN

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (ELW 815)



1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to
2 I want to see . . . the bright-ness of God. I want to
3 I'm look - ing for . . . the com - ing of Christ. I want to



fol - low Je - sus. God set the stars to give
look at Je - sus. Clear Sun of righ-teous-ness,
be with Je - sus. When we have run . . . with



light to the world. The star of my life is Je - sus.
shine on my path, and show me the way to the Fa - ther.
pa-tience the race, we shall know the joy of Je - sus.

Refrain



In him there is no dark-ness at all. The night and the



day are both a - like. The Lamb is the light of the



cit - y of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

King of Kings

Ralph Simpson

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 7:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m. Mon—Thurs

Sunday, February 5

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist— Handbell Choir
 6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Tuesday, February 7

9:30 AM Pantry
 1:00 PM Witness Committee
 6:00 PM CREATE—Art, Crafts and Music for
 Children age 3 through grade 6

Wednesday, February 8

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

Thursday, February 9

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

Friday, February 10

5:30 pm Young Adult Dinner

Sunday, February 12

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

Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Altar Clean-up
02/05	8:00 AM	Kirsten Barnes	Jennifer Ports	Betsy Smith		Kathleen Lemke, Lois Ann Schroder	Alex Bastian, Michael Poster	Melissa Yakim
02/05	10:30 AM	Tristan Ericson	Janet Fitch	Ed Le Cates	George Fitch	Deb & Larry Becker	Kem Vaught, Larry Becker, *Steve Heistand, Dan Garber	Ann Anstadt, Sandy Dicken-sheets

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

News and Updates February 5, 2023

York County Senior Honors Choir—Join us next Sunday afternoon for a delightful program of choral music presented by some of York County's most talented High School Students. The Concert is at 3:00 PM in the church nave. **It is free and open to the public.**

The elementary children exceeded their goal of \$1000 for God's Global Barnyard.

Thank you to everyone who contributed in support of the children. They were able to buy 5 chicks, 1 rooster, 1 Family Farm, 2 goats, 1 piglet, 1 fish farm, and 2 honeybees!

First meeting for traveling to Tanzania to our sister congregation in June of 2024 was held on Wednesday, January 8. 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.

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.

2023 Calendars are available. Please make any donation. All proceeds go towards the purchase of a canopy for the Food Pantry.

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

The St. Paul's Dinner Group will be starting back up during the months of April and May. They are a great way to get better acquainted with our church friends over a casual meal. Look for the sign-up sheet at the Springettsbury entrance. Sign-up deadline is today, February 5th.

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". This 13-week session will help you navigate the scriptures and the references to Christ Our Savior and Lord.

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.

Epiphany 5 A 2023

Isaiah 58:1-9a

1 Corinthians 2:1-12

Matthew 5:13-20

Once upon a time our house was filled with piano practicing, horn practicing, and even at times vocal practicing. Next door a little girl delighted in cheerleading practice, up the street an old man practiced his golf swing while across the street a boy 60 years younger practiced chipping with a new iron. A short distance the other direction kids were practicing basketball, football, soccer and during the heat of summer swimming. An Egyptian woman new to the neighborhood joyfully practiced her English on anyone who would listen.

Practice is what makes us proficient at things like: piano, horn, singing, cheering, golf, basketball, football, soccer, swimming, or a new language.

The Prophet Isaiah is all about practice too. He is reminding God's people of the need to practice righteousness. Righteousness may not be as familiar to us as piano, horn, singing, cheering, golf, basketball, football, soccer, swimming or a new language. But for Isaiah it had to do with the heart of a relationship with God. The people of Israel, having been out of touch with the ways of God during a time of exile, are encouraged by the Prophet to restore fully their relationship with God. Practice, says the prophet, if you want to seek God and to know God's ways, and the way of righteousness.

In everyday life righteousness isn't a word we encounter with any frequency. It has become for many a foreign word and concept. We usually hear it used in a derogatory sense as in "He is so self-righteous." Years ago in preaching class Dr. Ridenhour called words like righteousness "50 cent words." With inflation they may be more like Suzan B. Anthony words! He was all about getting the class of future preachers to give people simpler less complex words to express the good news of God's love in Christ Jesus. Righteousness was one such word. "Mr. Reep," he would say after delivering a sermon for my classmate's critique, "what on earth did you mean when you said righteousness." I confess, those days in Dr. Ridenhour's preaching classes have always made me a little skittish when it comes to sermons heavily laden with biblical vocabulary words.

Righteousness has to do with being made right in the eyes, or realm, or in relationship with God. In the days of the Prophet Isaiah righteousness had a lot to do with maintaining and keeping the law of the Lord. The 10 Commandments figured into such things, as did participation in temple, offering appointed sacrifices, the use of financial resources, what you ate and drank, and how you washed; everything from your hands to the pots in which you cooked.

Righteousness has to do with being made right in the eyes, or realm, or in relationship with God. In the days of the writer of the first Gospel, Matthew, righteousness becomes the active practice of faith in Christ Jesus. Jesus fulfills all righteousness he proclaims. We receive righteousness as a gift. That is what is granted to us through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. So the challenge when we hear biblical texts like the ones before us this morning call upon us to think of how we practice righteousness or perhaps more easily understood as practicing giftedness.

Practicing giftedness leads to practicing faith. Or put another way, doing the work of the Lord. "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Notice the glory is for the Father in heaven, not for

those doing the work. (That's why historically we have refrained from applause during worship, as worship is all about offering our prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God the Father. Anything we do is to bring glory to God.) This is the biblical verse we recite at every baptism. Proclaiming to the newly baptized and to all who gathered in the community of faith that through Baptism we are called to a life where giftedness is practiced, so let your light shine! We announce these words to infants, children, teenagers, and adults. We welcome people into the community of faith with words encouraging active participation. We welcome people into a community where the norm of faith and life is good works. "Practice makes perfect" so the old slogan goes. But in our lives of faith we are made perfect in Christ's gift to us on Calvary, we are perfectly accepted, we are perfectly loved, we are perfectly forgiven, so that we can spend the gift of life practicing righteousness. By so doing, says Jesus in today's gospel reading, you will be great in the kingdom of heaven.

If indeed the kingdom of heaven is near in Christ Jesus, then our practicing matters. Losing the bonds of injustice, undoing the thongs of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, sharing our bread with the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into our house, clothing the naked, all of these activities let light break forth like the morning dawn. Morning light is that wonderful light that opens up to us a new day, a day where opportunities abound, where yesterdays are behind us and the future is straining to welcome us. With such light, proclaims the Prophet, healing springs up quickly. And the beauty of practicing righteousness is that the one who vindicates you goes before you (God leads you) and the glory of the Lord is your rear guard (God protects your back side so that you don't have to be looking over your shoulder, perplexed about someone sneaking up from behind, or concerned about where you have been.) This allows for practicing giftedness as it perpetually opens up something new, and bright, and hopeful. Today is not lived in the darkness or despair of days gone by. In Christ, with Christ, through Christ, you and I are free to practice giftedness; loving and serving and giving, letting light so shine for the Father's glory. And who among us doesn't need morning light, a new day, with yesterday forgiven and God's future straining to meet us? So the prophet says "Shout out, don't hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Practice giftedness. Practice righteousness. Practice letting light shine, so that injustice, yokes, oppression, hunger, homelessness, nakedness and everything that puts people under or holds them down will be removed. Your light, the light of Christ shining through you, brings healing beyond your wildest imagination. Practice is important whether you are; sitting at the piano, pushing air through the circuitous pipe of a horn, singing, cheering on your favorite team, improving your golf swing, working out the next layup, catching the long pass, kicking the soccer ball past the goalie, shaving a fraction of a second of your best swimming event, or struggling to master a new language.

Practice is what people of faith do. Christian people practice the language that often times sounds religious but is really the language of being gifted by a loving Savior. We practice letting light shine. We practice letting God lead. We practice calling on God for help, healing, wholeness. We practice living life in relationship with a loving God who sets things right and makes us righteous in his sight. Practice righteousness. Practice giftedness. Practice letting your light shine so that others see and glorify God. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]

[not printed]

Psalms 112:1-9 [10]**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]**

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. [¹³And we speak of

these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶“For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.]

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20

[Jesus said:] “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Next Sunday's Readings: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 or Sirach 15:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37.

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