

A man wearing a straw hat, a plaid shirt, and dark trousers is working in a vineyard. He is leaning over a row of grapevines, examining the leaves. In the background, a tractor is visible, driving down a dirt path between the rows of vines. The scene is set in a lush, green vineyard with rows of grapevines stretching into the distance.

GO ²AND WORK

IN THE VINEYARD TODAY

MATTHEW 21:28

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 187 years. By worshipping with us today, you become part of that living tradition.

Offerings Offerings are received during the liturgy. They are presented along with gifts of bread and wine at the altar. You may also donate via our website at www.stpaulsyork.org

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.

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 liturgy is live-streamed into the Nursery. Parents are asked to stay with their children. Quiet activities are also available in the Narthex for infant through preschool children to use with an adult.

Please be aware that there is a rise in individuals loitering at church buildings and asking for money. This is panhandling and it is illegal. Please do not give money. Simply direct them to contact the Pastor at a time other than during worship. Thank you.

Parents, please do accompany your child to the restroom during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.



The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God
in memory of our fathers by Mike & Becky Bingham.

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
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Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net
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Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, October 1, 2023
Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:30 AM

TEMPLE TALK *Harvest Dinner & Auctions* Jessica Ericson

PRELUDE *Praise the Lord, Rise Up Rejoicing* Wayne Wold

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The assembly stands turning to face the Baptismal Font. 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

Voices Raised to You (ELW 845)



1 Voic - es raised to you we of - fer; tune them, God, for
2 All cre - a - tion joins to praise you; earth and sky your
3 Christ, the song of love in - car - nate, touch - ing earth with
4 Spir - it, flam - ing through cre - a - tion, kin - dle faith with -
5 How can an - y praise we of - fer mea - sure all the



songs of praise. Hearts and hands we bring in trib - ute
works dis - play. Art and mu - sic, gifts you lend us,
heav - en's grace, for your liv - ing, suf - f'ring, dy - ing,
in each heart. Lift our voic - es high in cho - rus;
thanks we owe? Take our hearts and hands and voic - es—



for your gifts through all our days. Al - le - lu - ia!
we re - turn to you to - day. Al - le - lu - ia!
for your ris - ing, hear our praise! Al - le - lu - ia!
through our hands your love im - part. Al - le - lu - ia!
gifts of love we can be - stow. Al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!
Al - le - lu - ia! God, cre - a - tor, source of life!
Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, re - deem - er, Lord of life!
Al - le - lu - ia! Spir - it, help - er, breath of life!
Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!

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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of love, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them; keep us from those things that harm us; and guide us in the way of salvation; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

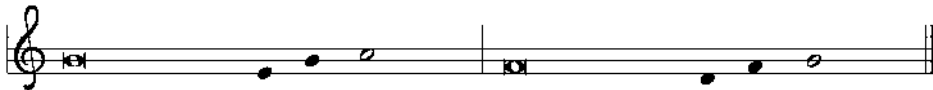
¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, "The way of the LORD is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the LORD is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

PSALM Psalm 25:1-8

The organ introduces the tone, then it is sung unaccompanied by all.



- ¹ To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my | trust in you;***
let me not be humiliated, nor let my enemies triumph | over me.
- ² Let none who look to you be | put to shame;***
let the treacherous be disappointed | in their schemes.
- ³ Show me your | ways, O LORD,***
and teach | me your paths.
- ⁴ Lead me in your | truth and teach me,***
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.
- ⁵ Remember, O LORD, your compas- | sion and love,***
for they are from | everlasting.
- ⁶ Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;***
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your good- | ness, O LORD.
- ⁷ Gracious and upright | is the LORD;***
therefore he teaches sinners | in his way.
- ⁸ He guides the humble in | doing right***
and teaches his way | to the lowly.

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:1-13 (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 GOSPELMatthew 21:23-32 (*back cover*)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Glory to you, O Lord.**Praise to you, O Christ.***Sit***SERMON**

Rev. 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 church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

A brief silence.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the church. Give bishops, pastors, deacons, and teachers the gifts of wisdom and discernment. Be with them in bold truth and faithful witness.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for the earth. Help us to look to the interests of others as we make choices that impact the environment. Summon us to be advocates for healthy waterways, habitats, and air. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for those in government, the military, and other positions of authority (*local and national leaders may be named*). Give them humble and willing hearts, looking to the needs of others. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for all caregivers and people who are sick or suffering in any way (*especially*). Give them encouragement and consolation in your presence. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for this congregation. Be at work in us and unite us in your love as we labor together for the sake of the gospel. Form us into good stewards of all that is entrusted to us. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all the saints who died secure in the knowledge of salvation. Keep us fearless in our faith and certain of your resurrection. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ. **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

OFFERING 8:00 AM *Now Thank We All Our God* Georg Friedrich Kaufmann

10:30 AM Chancel Choir *Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven* Joseph Clokey

Stand

OFFERTORY HYMN *Come to the Table (ELW 481)*

The gifts of bread and wine and monetary gifts are presented at the altar.



Come to the ta - ble of mer - cy, pre - pared with the wine and the bread.



All who are hun - gry and thirst - y, come, and your souls will be fed.

Continued on next page...



Come at the Lord's in - vi - ta - tion; re - ceive from his nail - scarred hand.



Eat of the bread of sal - va - tion; drink of the blood of the Lamb.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Merciful God,

as grains of wheat scattered upon the hills were gathered together to become one bread, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory through Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

DIALOGUE

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

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; 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 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.*





name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,

that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you

for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,

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

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

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

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

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 has risen, Christ will come again.

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.

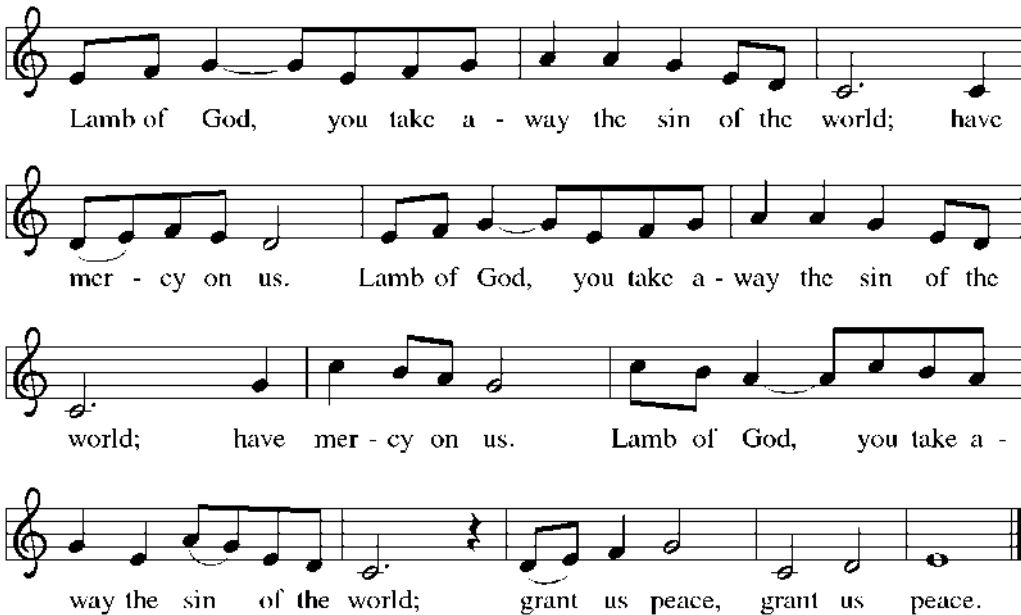
For thine is the kingdom,

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

Holy Communion at St. Paul's Church is "open" to all believers who trust that the Risen Christ is present for his people in the Holy Eucharist.

Procedure for receiving Communion:

- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle.*
- 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 *By Your Hand You Feed Your People (ELW 469)*



1 By your hand you feed your peo - ple, food of an - gels, heav-en's bread.
2 In this meal we taste your sweet-ness, bread for hun - ger, wine of peace.
3 Send us now with faith and cour - age to the hun - gry, lost, be - reaved.



For these gifts we did not la - bor, by your grace have we been fed:
Ho - ly word and ho - ly wis - dom sat - is - fy our deep - est needs.
In our liv - ing and our dy - ing, we be - come what we re - ceive:



Christ's own bod - y, blessed and bro - ken, cup o'er - flow - ing, life out - poured,



giv - en as a liv - ing to - ken of your world re - deemed, re - stored.

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

Now Thank We All Our God (ELW 840) next page

DISMISSAL

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

POSTLUDE

Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense

Paul Manz

Now Thank We All Our God

1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
2 Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,

who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in highest heaven,

who, from our mothers' arms, has blest us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed,
the one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore;

with countless gifts of love, and still is ours to-day,
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ever more.

Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Clean-up
10/1	8:00 AM	Kirsten Barnes	Denise Rider	Tanner Culp		Mike & Linda Hanson	Jeff Riese, John Monk	Kathleen Lemke, Ann Anstadt
	10:30 AM	Tonya Cave	Janet Fitch	Patty Snyder	Patty Snyder	Jim & Nancy Bennett, Mike & Becky Bingham	Dave Kopp, Sandy Dickensheets, Steve Heistand	Deb Becker, Isabelle Lehr

Today—Sr High Youth Fellowship grades 9 through 12

Faith and Conversation around the table

Sunday, October 1st Issacs Restaurant, South York Plaza 5:00pm

On Sunday, October 1st Sr High Youth Grades 9 through 12 are invited to share conversation and dinner around the table. They will connect with each other while discussing a topic that they helped to choose ahead of time. Meals will be shared, stories will be told, together they will experience God's nearness, God's kindness and God's Love. While sharing stories they will experience God's Grace. At the Table we Talk - At the Table we Listen.

Next Week—Youth Fellowship grades 7 through 12

11:45am following the 10:30am Liturgy

Sunday, October 8 Youth Room

Following the Liturgy the Youth will fill their lunch plates during 2nd Sunday Sandwiches and come to the Youth Room for a time of fellowship, prayer, and fun group icebreakers.



HARVEST DINNER

Harvest Dinner Tickets are on sale. The dinner will be held at 5:30 PM on October 7, 2023. *Please note the new date.* Proceeds benefit the Food Pantry. This year will feature select regional wines and local microbrews paired with the menu. Ticket cost is \$100 per person. Contact the office for tickets. For those who have asked, you need not drink wine or beer as there are other options available.

Silent Auction items are on display in the Good Shepherd Room. Please take time to check out what is on offer. Make a bid! Get a Holiday gift! Support the Food Pantry!

DR. GEOFFREY SIMON, ORGANIST Today at 4:00 PM

The York Chapter, American Guild of Organists is pleased to present Geoffrey Simon in an organ recital at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 25 West Springettsbury Ave. York, PA on Sunday, October 1 at 4:00 PM. Invite a friend to join you for this organ recital.



Altar Flower sponsors are needed! You may sponsor 1 or 2 vases. Each vase is \$35.

10/8—1 vase

10/15—2 vases

11/5—2 vases

From bread and wine to bountiful giving: Sharing your time and talents with others

As part of this year's stewardship campaign, we are highlighting the work of church committees and ministries in hopes of recruiting new members who can share their time and talents with others.

Food Pantry

We read in scriptures that Jesus says we are to "Love your neighbor as yourself." One way we do this at St. Paul's is through our Food Pantry where we provide food for 90-100 families every Tuesday morning. There are many volunteers needed to make this ministry run smoothly. Below you can see some of the opportunities. Contact Teresa Rohrbaugh or Patty Snyder to volunteer.



12 volunteers who help our neighbors shop in the pantry each Tuesday from 9:15-11:45.

6 volunteers to receive and put away deliveries of food from York County Food Bank or Central Penn Food Bank generally on Thursday mornings.

Volunteers who can pick up day-old bread from Panera on Monday evenings from West York and deliver it to our pantry on Tuesday mornings.

5-6 people to re-stock the shelves on several Sunday mornings each month.

Someone who can pick up 6 cases of eggs from Jefferson PA and deliver them to the pantry a couple times a year.

Someone to join the food inventory and ordering team.

The Christian Education Committee

As stated in the By Laws of our Constitution, *the purpose of the Christian Education Committee is to assist all ages in their walk as disciples of Christ. The committee will do this by providing opportunities for instruction, formation and reflection of the Christian faith.*

The Christian Education Committee meets 9 times throughout the year to brainstorm, plan and oversee implementation of learning opportunities. The committee currently meets on the fourth Tuesday 12:30-1:30 PM via Zoom. Meeting times and days can be changed as needed by the members. We are currently seeking a chairperson and 2 additional committee members. Contact the Church Office or Pastor Reep if you are willing to serve.



This Week at St. Paul's
Church Office hours Mon-Thurs 8am-4pm

Sunday, October 1

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School for All
9:15 AM Confirmation Class
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
4:00 PM Organ Recital
5:00 PM Sr. High Youth—Issacs
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Monday, October 2

Preschool Fire Truck Day

Tuesday, October 3

Preschool Fire Truck Day
9:30 AM Food Pantry
6:00 PM CREATE—Preschool thru Grade 6

Wednesday, October 4

10:30 AM NO Bible Study this week

Thursday, October 5

6:30 PM Handbell Choir—Christ Hall
7:30 PM Chancel Choir—Music Room

Saturday, October 7

5:30 PM Harvest Dinner & Auction

Sunday, October 8

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School for All
9:15 AM Confirmation Class
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm



Aligning with our current lectionary scriptures using the gospel of Matthew, our Sunday Adult Christian Education class will begin with a five-week study of the book of Matthew. Several scriptures will be featured throughout the gospel narrative, and we will use a Book of Faith Series publication from Augsburg Fortress. Please join us starting September 17th for this deeper look into Matthew! Tristan Ericson will facilitate and the class will meet in Christ Hall located on the main level.



Mission Trip to Tanzania—Our delegation has been assembled. We are blessed to have a group of 13 households comprised of 26 persons representing St. Paul's as we travel to our sister congregation next June. If you would like to help defray the cost of our delegation please use a special envelope located in the pew rack and mark it "Tanzania Trip Donation". Please remember that this is not a vacation, it is a mission trip. We do

need help defraying the cost for participants.



Food Pantry—Fall

Items needed: Canned fruit, canned chicken, canned tuna & Peanut Butter. We also need paper grocery bags with handles and plastic bags. Money donations are gratefully accepted. Please place cash or check in a "special" envelope marked "Pantry". **Volunteers are needed Tuesday mornings to help our neighbors shop. Call Teresa Rohrbaugh or**

the church office (717-843-8155) to volunteer.

Please be sure to check with the church secretary *before* you schedule your meetings at the church. Call or email the office with your request.

Proper 21 A, 2023

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 Psalm 25:1-9 Philippians 2:1-13 Matthew 21:23-32

“*Go and work in the vineyard today.*” It is a clear command, “*Go and work.*” There are no words associated with how you may feel about working in the vineyard, or if working in the vineyard is something that you even like doing, or if you already have plans for the day, or if you have little to no interest in grapes, jam, juice or wine. It is a command, go. As God’s children we have other commands that confront us. A clear one is the “*do this*” associated with the Lord’s Supper. The command sounds like law, but in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, we receive abundantly the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God through the body and blood of his Son, Christ Jesus.

From bread and wine to bountiful giving is the theme of this year’s stewardship emphasis. The bountiful giving flows forth from the command associated with the gifts of bread and wine on the altar. “*Do this*” Jesus says “*for the remembrance of me.*” And in the doing of “*this*” we are gifted with bountiful lives that are lived out in the doing of other things that Jesus commands. There are many things commanded in the Bible. I simplify the list of things to make the Christian life less cumbersome; feed the hungry, cloth the naked, visit the imprisoned, care for the widow and orphan, baptize making disciples, and celebrate the supper. Yes there are others, this is not an exhaustive list, but what I have observed over the years is when your days are occupied with this rather short list, things that you can remember by counting basically on one hand, many of the other things seem to fall into place.

On Tuesday I received a group text, from my siblings. Most of the time my youngest sister Joan originates our family text messages. The rest of us weigh in as we see fit. Some days, I am so engaged with things that I forget to even read the message until late in the day. But on Tuesday the text came through with a photograph of my mom holding a big pod of plump juicy looking concord grapes held in the palm of her hand. The caption read “*mom is making grape juice today.*” My sister Julia commented “*wonderful*” and included a big smiley face emoji. My brother Mark added “*nice looking grapes are they from your vines?*” I didn’t wait for Mike or Walt to chime in and my ornery self-got the better of me. I quickly texted to the group “*I made my grape juice three weeks ago, let it sit out on the counter, drank a lot of it yesterday and haven’t a clue where I am, what day it is, or why you all are texting me!*” Oh, and I included the emoji with tears of laughter rolling down the cheeks.

As we begin our stewardship emphasis we begin with the vast scope of kingdom work that is before us. There is more to vineyard work than “*making juice today.*” Go and work in the vineyard doesn’t provide many options. You either do or you don’t. That’s the way it was with the man who had two sons in the story Jesus tells to the chief priests and elders. One son says that he won’t go and work in the vineyard and then he does. And one son says that he will go and work in the vineyard and then he doesn’t. Jesus asks the religious authorities “*which of the two did the will of his father?*”

I have gleaned a few things from visits to vineyards. Number one; there is a lot of work to be done. The list of jobs required to operate a vineyard with any degree of success is mind boggling. Planting, tending, weeding, fertilizing, deterring pests, pruning, watering, sampling, harvesting, pressing, storing, testing, bottling, corking, labeling, marketing, selling, shipping, and insuring. It takes a diverse work force with a wide variety of skills, talents, gifts, and determina-

tion. It isn't likely that any one person will possess all of the necessary skills to operate a vineyard or excel at them. What is more likely is that productive vineyard work will be done in community.

During October we focus on the work we are called into by our Gracious Heavenly Father. The work is central to our lives of faith. It isn't just about maintaining the status quo, keeping the institution operational for its own sake. The work that is central to our lives of faith is work that bears witness to the one whom, as St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, "*emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.*" The work that we do is centered on the work done for us by our Savior, Christ Jesus. It is our communal work to make known Christ's love for a hurting, broken, sinful world.

I have gleaned a few things from working in congregations. Number one; there is a lot of work to be done. The list of jobs required to operate a congregation focused on mission with any degree of success is mind boggling. Just as there is planting, tending, weeding, fertilizing, deterring pests, pruning, watering, sampling, harvesting, pressing, storing, testing, bottling, corking, labeling, marketing, selling, shipping, and insuring to keep a vineyard going, a similar list of activity is essential for a healthy faithful congregation. It takes a diverse work force with a wide variety of skills, talents, gifts, and determination. It isn't likely that any one person will possess all of the necessary skills to sustain a congregation and her mission to the neighborhood, greater community and world. What is more likely is that a congregation's work will be done in community.

"To teach the world that God is love" is the congregation's mission statement. Do you want to go into the world teaching the love of God? As I stated at the outset *"Go and work in the vineyard today."* It is a clear command, *"Go and work."* There are no words associated with how you may feel about working in the vineyard or teaching God's love, or if teaching God's love is something that you like to do, or if you already have plans for the day that might not easily squeeze God's love for the world into the schedule, or if you have little to no interest in love or mission or people or grace or forgiveness or repentance or second chances. It is a command, go.

Jesus rephrases it as he comes among us. He simply commands us to go into the world. It sounds like this; *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."* And then he reminds his faithful followers *"remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* We are not left alone in the work that has been assigned to us. We have been entrusted with gifts and talents, skills and finances. All of which are to be utilized for kingdom work. What you give, how much or how little, is in response to God's loving desire for all living creatures.

This month we prayerfully consider all that has been entrusted to us. Maybe prayer makes it seem too mysterious for you. So simply consider the command of Christ to *"do this"* so that from bread and wine you will be bountiful in your giving of time, and money, and skill, and talent, as you share in the communal work of vineyard, congregation, and kingdom. And Jesus asked them *"who did the will of the Father?"* Amen.

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

[not printed]

Psalms 25:1-9

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,

⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

GOSPEL: Matthew 21:23-32

When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”