

*I am there  
among  
them*

MATTHEW 18:20

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

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

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

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

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](http://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.

## Welcome Back Pastor Reep!

We are glad you are back and have had a time of rest and rejuvenation while on sabbatical. We are happy that you were able to be with family and friends, reconnect with people, and travel to places new and old. We celebrate your return!



The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God by the Sabbatical Committee in celebration of Pastor Reep's return and in grateful appreciation to all those who helped our congregation while he was away.

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	<a href="mailto:prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">prreep.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Youth Director	Kelly Moore-Spencer	<a href="mailto:kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Organist, Choir Director	Victor Fields	<a href="mailto:vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Children Choirs Director	Julianna Jones	<a href="mailto:jjones.stpaulsyork@comcast.net">jjones.stpaulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Bell Choirs Director	Leah McComas	<a href="mailto:lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com">lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com</a>
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Sexton	Ted Weikert	<a href="mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net">st.paulsyork@comcast.net</a>
Preschool Director	Deb Becker	<a href="mailto:director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com">director@stpaulspreschoolyork.com</a>

**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Sunday, September 10, 2023**  
**Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:30 AM**

**PRELUDE**

*Praise Be to You, Jesus Christ*

Georg Böhm

*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.*

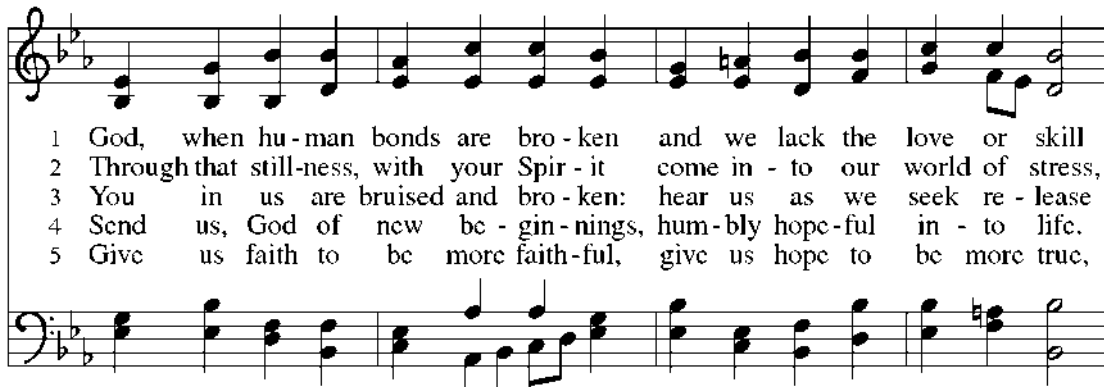
Most merciful God,

**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**

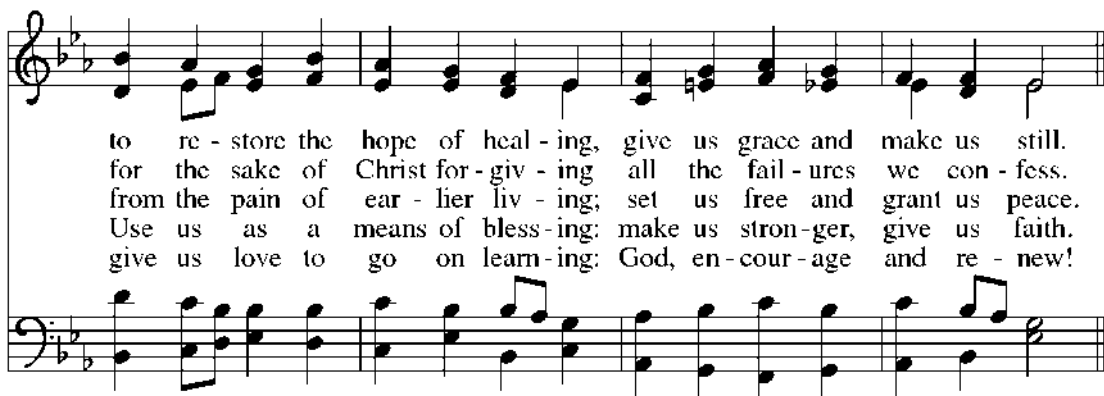
Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## ENTRANCE HYMN

### *God When Human Bonds Are Broken (ELW 603)*



1 God, when hu-man bonds are bro-ken and we lack the love or skill  
2 Through that still-ness, with your Spir-it come in - to our world of stress,  
3 You in us are bruised and bro-ken: hear us as we seek re - lease  
4 Send us, God of new be - gin - nings, hum-bly hope-ful in - to life.  
5 Give us faith to be more faith-ful, give us hope to be more true,



to re - store the hope of heal - ing, give us grace and make us still.  
for the sake of Christ for - giv - ing all the fail - ures we con - fess.  
from the pain of ear - lier liv - ing; set us free and grant us peace.  
Use us as a means of bless - ing; make us stron - ger, give us faith.  
give us love to go on learn - ing; God, en - cour - age and re - new!

## 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

Almighty and eternal God, you know our problems and our weaknesses better than we ourselves. In your love and by your power help us in our confusion and, in spite of our weakness, make us firm in faith; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Sit*

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

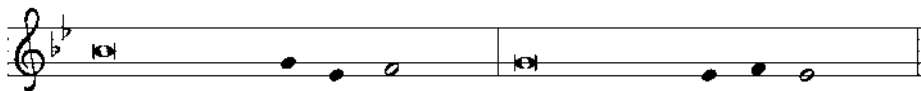
### FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-11

*(back cover)*

**PSALM** Psalm 119:33-40

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

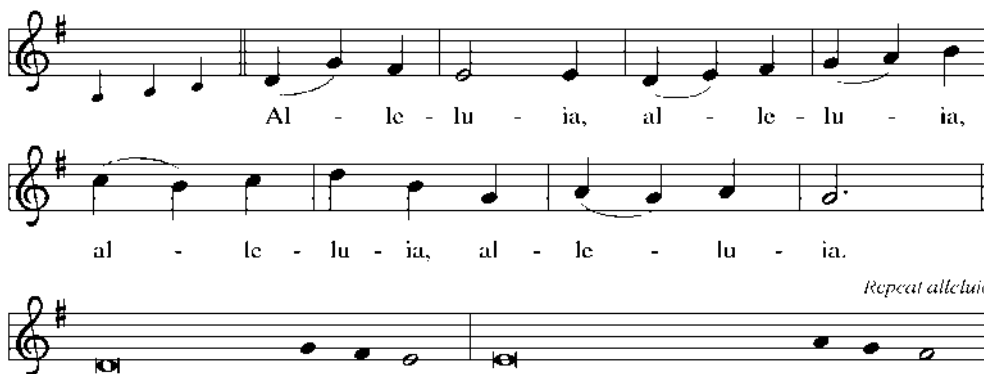


- 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way | of your statutes,\*  
and I shall keep it | to the end.
- 34 Give me understanding, and I shall | keep your law;\*  
I shall keep it with | all my heart.
- 35 Make me go in the path of | your commandments,\*  
for that is | my desire.
- 36 Incline my heart to | your decrees\*  
and not to | unjust gain.
- 37 Turn my eyes from watching | what is worthless;\*  
give me life | in your ways.
- 38 Fulfill your promise | to your servant,\*  
which you make to | those who fear you.
- 39 Turn away the reproach | which I dread,\*  
because your judg- | ments are good.
- 40 Behold, I long for | your commandments;\*  
in your righteousness pre- | serve my life.

**SECOND READING** Romans 13:8-14 (back cover)

*Stand*

**VERSE** *Sung by all*



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

**HOLY GOSPEL** Matthew 18:15-20

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

*At the conclusion of the Gospel.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

(back cover)

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

*Lord of all Nations (ELW #716)*



1 Lord of all na - tions, grant me grace to love all  
2 Break down the wall that would di - vide thy chil - dren,  
3 For - give me, Lord, where I have erred by love - less  
4 Give me thy cour - age, Lord, to speak when - ev - er  
5 With thine own love may I be filled and by thy



peo - ple, ev - 'ry race; and in each per - son may I  
Lord, on ev - 'ry side. My neigh - bor's good let me pur -  
act and thought - less word. Make me to see the wrong I  
strong op - press the weak. Should I my - self the vic - tim  
Ho - ly Spir - it willed, that all I touch, wher - e'er I



see my kin - dred, loved, re - deemed by thee.  
sue; let Chris - tian love bind warm and true.  
do will cru - ci - fy my Lord a - new.  
be, help me for - give, re - mem - b'ring thee.  
be, may be di - vine - ly touched by thee.

**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

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

Hold us accountable, O God. Show us where repentance is needed and lead us in paths of intentional compassion and listening. Help us extend hands of reconciliation and care, especially in relationships with other Christians and people of other faiths. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Reveal your miracles to us, O God. Move us to cherish you as we behold the wonders of creation. Renew the seas and the soil, the forests and the creatures that live in them. Turn us to ways of living that respect your creation. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Make us to lead with honor, O God. Guide judges and legislators, police, and government officials to create and uphold just laws. Move us to treat all people with dignity. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Help us comfort those who suffer, O God. Bring peace to all who are vulnerable, frightened, despairing, or sick (*especially*). Guard their waking and their sleeping. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Awaken us, O God. Challenge and encourage us to value the vocation of others. We pray for all discerning new possibilities or changing employment (*especially*). In all our diverse callings, teach us to love our neighbor above all else. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

You are our hope, O God. We remember with thanksgiving your disciples who died in faith (*especially*). May their trust in your promise be our protection and our hope. 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, 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*

<b>OFFERING</b>	8:00 AM	<i>Meditation on Come, Ye Disconsolate</i>	Joyce Jones
	10:30 AM	Chancel Choir <i>Keep Me Faithfully in thy Paths</i>	G. F. Handel

*Stand*

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



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

**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.**

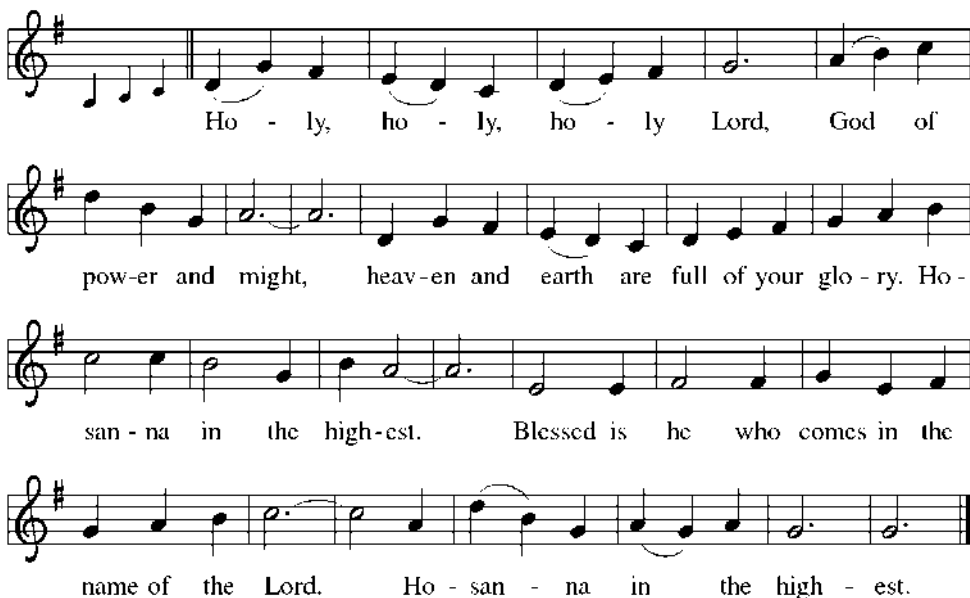
**PREFACE** *The preface appropriate to the day is said.*

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.*



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

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,**

**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 10:30 AM

*Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (ELW 835) 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

*Give to Our God Immortal Praise (ELW 848) next page*

## DISMISSAL

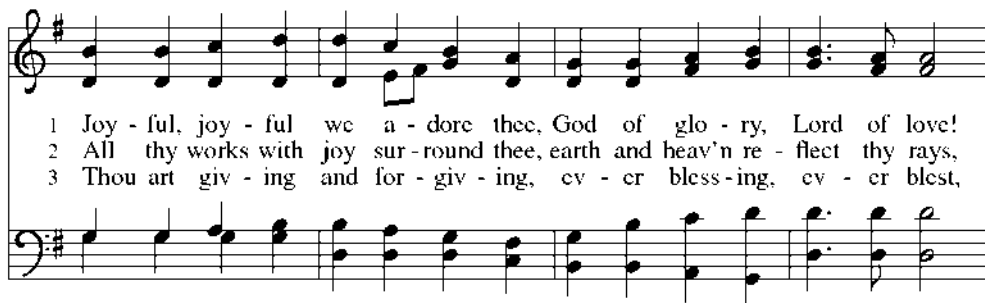
Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE

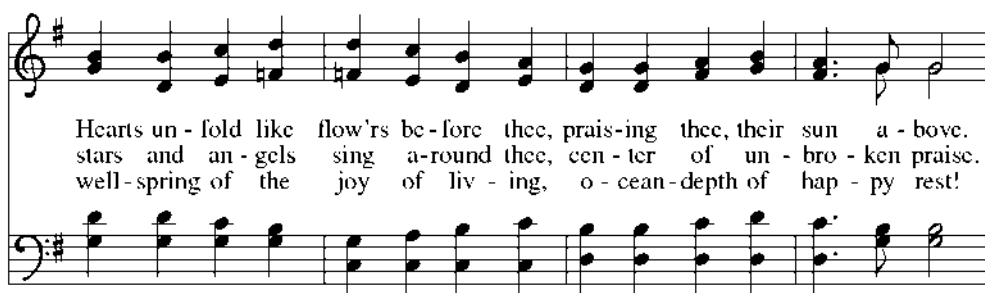
*Christ is Made the Sure Foundation*

David Cherwien

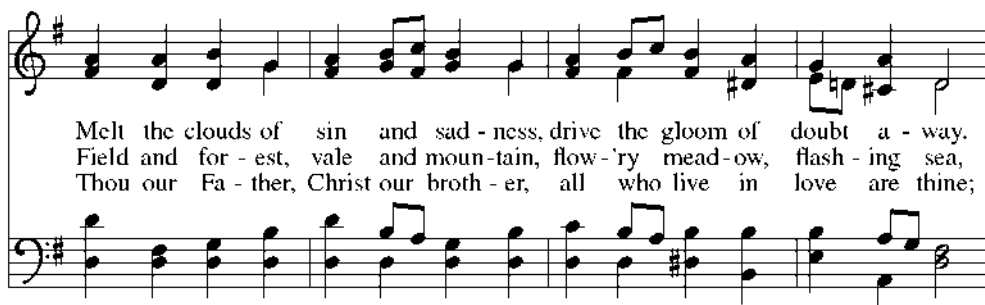
# Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee



1 Joy - ful, joy - ful we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love!  
2 All thy works with joy sur - round thee, earth and heav'n re - flect thy rays,  
3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blest,



Hearts un - fold like flow'rs be - fore thee, prais - ing thee, their sun a - bove.  
stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.  
well - spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean - depth of hap - py rest!



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the gloom of doubt a - way.  
Field and for - est, vale and moun - tain, flow - 'ry mead - ow, flash - ing sea,  
Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our broth - er, all who live in love are thine;



Giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day.  
chant - ing bird, and flow - ing foun - tain call us to re - joice in thee.  
teach us how to love each oth - er, lift us to the joy di - vine!

# Give to Our God Immortal Praise!

1 Give to our God im - mor - tal praise! Mer - cy and  
2 He sent his Son with pow'r to save from guilt and  
3 Give to the Lord of lords re - nown; the King of

truth are all his ways. Won - ders of grace to  
dark - ness and the grave. Won - ders of grace to  
kings with glo - ry crown. His mer - cies ev - er

God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.  
God be - long; re - peat his mer - cies in your song.  
shall en - dure when lords and kings are known no more!

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Give to Our God Immortal Praise!". It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are arranged in three parts, with the first part having three verses. The second part continues the lyrics, and the third part concludes with a double bar line.

## 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 extend birthday wishes to our September “Vintage” Birthdays:  
Janice Cromer*

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

**Sunday, September 10**

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist  
9:15 AM Welcome Back Brunch—Fellowship Hall  
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream  
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

**Monday, September 11**

1st Day Preschool  
7:00 PM Council Meeting— Christ Hall

**Tuesday, September 12**

9:30 AM Food Pantry

**Wednesday, September 13**

10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ Hall

**Thursday, September 14**

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

**Friday, September 15**

Newsletter Deadline

**Sunday, September 17**

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

**Sunday, September 17, 9:15 AM—Sunday School resumes.**



**Sunday Morning  
Adult Study**

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.

**Harvest Dinner Tickets are on sale.** The dinner will be held 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.



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.



The Sabbatical Committee invites everyone to an  
**Aloha Return for Pastor Stan**  
**TODAY 9:15-10:15am**  
**Fellowship Hall**

Welcome back Pastor during a breakfast buffet and Thank the pastors and members that helped during the sabbatical!

*Serving the Lord with Gladness*

Please find a replacement if you are unable to serve on you scheduled date.

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Clean-up
9/10	8:00 AM	Bob Reed	Jennifer Ports			John & Kathy Monk	Jeff Riese, John Monk	Ron & Norma Riese
	10:30 AM	Tristan Ericson	Tonya Cave	George & Janet Fitch	George & Janet Fitch	Kem & Cindy Vaught	Kem Vaught, Larry Becker, Steve Heistand, Dan Garber	Janet & Larry Moore



St Paul’s is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church’s Clothing Ministry and your help is requested. Union collects ‘gently used’ clothing (and shoes) for its clothing closet and offers it **free of charge** to needy families in the York City community. A bin has been placed in the gathering space of Christ Hall to collect any clothing our members would like to donate. These donations will surely be a blessing to our neighbors. Union’s volunteers are very appreciative of our cooperation and our help.



**Mission Trip to Tanzania**—Our delegation has been assembled. We are blessed to have a group of 12 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.

Auto Plus, Bally Sports, Bed Bath and Beyond, Christmas Tree Shops, David's Bridal, Envision Health Care, Genesis Crypto currency Company, Lordstown Motors, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Oakland and the Arch Diocese of San Francisco, Serta, Tuesday Mornings, Universal Entertainment, Western Global Airlines, and Yellow Corporation have all filed Chapter 11 during this calendar year. The list seems to be rather long. However those previously identified comprise a small portion from the complete list of companies recently seeking something different through filing chapter 11.

Chapter 11 is a legal process signifying that past practice is no longer working in the present situation. It is not sustainable. The companies have in one way or another not reached the goals, met expectations or delivered financial profitability as defined by the CEO and CFO, the board of directors and their shareholders. Chapter 11 marks the present situation and seeks to put forth a new direction. It is a time for strategizing. It is a time for implementing new measures. The strategies and measures identify the "how" companies will move out of or beyond the past disappointment toward a new beginning and a future hope.

Often in such situations a person or persons are identified as not providing proper watch, not announcing a looming disaster, or glossing over downward trends. In Bible times such individuals were called Sentinels. Their job was to sound the alarm when they saw danger coming. The next part is a bit tricky. If they issued a warning, sounded the alarm, proclaimed the looming disaster and their words were unheeded, if the people didn't listen, then they were not blamed for the calamity, the downfall, or the destruction. But if they failed to issue a warning, sound an alarm, proclaim the potential looming disaster, they were held accountable for any calamity that would befall them. Ezekiel used the situation associated with a sentinel to stress the importance of individual responsibility. In the days of Ezekiel the sentinel was more closely associated with the idea of a military siege. The sentinel was a critical link in protecting the people from attack. In the modern work place, when things start unraveling you can bet that someone will get tagged as the sentinel, the one who should have told us, ought to have sounded the alarm, pointed out the ill that was to befall them.

This morning we are not in Chapter 11, but chapter 33 of Ezekiel's message to God's people. This is a transition chapter. Ezekiel is asking the people of God to leave behind their disappointing past performance and embrace a new strategy, well not so much new as calling out to them to live again. They are as good as dead in the eyes of the prophet. They have, among other things, abandoned the law, and the command of God to love. They have neglected the command to love, not in a sentimental or sexual way, but to love their neighbor the way that the Evangelist Mark half a millennium later would put it "love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself." Ezekiel makes it clear that God's people are missing the mark and the desire is not that of some CEO, or CFO, or board of directors or shareholders, but it is of the Lord God! From the prophet's vision they are as good as dead. But now like always, God doesn't take delight in the death of sinners or of the wicked, but prefers that they turn and live, that they have life. We hear this at the beginning of the Lenten season each year prior to making our confession.



In the book of Ezekiel the first 32 chapters comprise the prophet's words deriding the behavior of the people of Israel. He can't stand what they do nor can he stand what they don't do. In our modern confession we state it something like this; "forgive us for the things that we have done and for the things that we have left undone." Exorbitant interest is being charged in the markets. There is a lack of care for widows and orphans in their presence. Sojourners are being put out of the region. And the only thing being protected was the wicked way of life that had taken possession of them. They have completely forgotten the ways of God, especially the way in which they are to live in community and in relationship which is identified and defined by love. When teaching the Ten Commandments in catechetics we always stress the importance of them keeping us in right relationship with God and in right relationship with one another.

I don't always draw connections between love and repentance. But here the prophet is calling God's people to choose love. He is simply asking them to turn away (REPENT) from the hateful, evil, self-centered, ways that have enveloped them and to turn toward God's commands, God's law of love. With God there is always an opening for repentance for "turning." The act of choosing either evil or good is before them. They cannot rely on some treasury of good merit stored up and drawn upon when they have need of it. Nor is there an accumulated weight of sin which can inhibit and keep them from choosing the good. There is always the possibility of redirecting one's life, the religious word for it is repentance.

I have returned from a three month sabbatical. It was a truly remarkable gift and one for which I am heartily grateful. This is now a time of transition for us. Not that I am implying in any way that you have been choosing evil, or living hateful, self-centered lives during this summer! But rather it is a time where I was able to look back at what has driven us, occupied our time and energy and financial gifts. Where have we excelled at love? Where have we chosen to use our financial resources? What strategies have we employed drawing us more closely together with one another and with God? In what ways are we being examples for our children of living a Christian life? What I deduced is that any kind of meaningful life involves association with God. Now this isn't something that we are able to muster on our own. God first loved us. God chose to take on human flesh and dwell with us. As the only Son of the Father, Christ Jesus announces to us, like a sentinel of old, the things that loom on the horizon seeking to devour us. He calls to us in words and water, bread and wine, to have a new day, to awake from sleep, to live life fully loving one another as he loves us. His love for you and me is completely self-giving, even to the point of death. His love for you and me is completely live-giving as he is raised from death to life by the power of God the Father.

We are in the presence of the Lord this morning. He comes among us forgiving us from past burdens and opening up the possibility of a different future with him and with our neighbors. Christ Jesus through his own death and resurrection graciously provides a way for us. Through Jesus there is an opportunity for transition; turning from what was to what is through repentance. Ezekiel is soon going to tell of the valley of Dry bones and of God's amazing ability to gather up the dead dry bones, put sinew and flesh on them, and breathe life into them so that they can dance around! Christ Jesus gives us opportunity to turn and live. He is the transition needed moving us in love towards our neighbor and the joy of life lived in him, through him, with him. Amen.

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11**

So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

**Psalms 119:33-40****SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."