



MATTHEW 22:9

*Invite everyone  
you find*

# 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.

**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

Altar Flower sponsors are needed! 11/5—2 vases. You may sponsor 1 or 2 vases. Each vase is \$35. The 2024 sign-up sheet is now in the Springettsbury Hallway.

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>
Secretary	Patee Pizzirusso	<a href="mailto:st.paulsyork@comcast.net">st.paulsyork@comcast.net</a>
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>

**Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Sunday, October 15, 2023**  
**Holy Communion 8:00 & 10:30 AM**

**TEMPLE TALK**

Witness Committee

Earline Jones

**PRELUDE**

*Come Thou Almighty King*

Gerald Near

*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

*Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart (ELW 873)*

1 Re - joice, ye pure in heart! Re - joice, give thanks, and sing;  
 2 With voice as full and strong as o - cean's surg - ing praise,  
 3 With all the an - gel choirs, with all the saints on earth  
 4 Still lift your stan - dard high, still march in firm ar - ray,

your fes - tal ban - ner wave on high, the cross of Christ your king.  
 send forth the stur - dy hymns of old, the psalms of an - cient days.  
 pour out the strains of joy and bliss, true rap - ture, no - blest mirth.  
 as pil - grims through the dark - ness wend till dawns the gol - den day.

*Refrain*

Re - joice! Re - joice! Re - joice, give thanks, and sing!  
 Re - joice! Re - joice!

5 At last the march shall end;  
 the wearied ones shall rest;  
 the pilgrims find their home at last,  
 Jerusalem the blest. *Refrain*

6 Praise God who reigns on high,  
 the Lord whom we adore:  
 the Father, Son, and Spirit blest,  
 one God forevermore. *Refrain*

## 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 God, source of every blessing, your generous goodness comes to us anew every day. By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Sit*

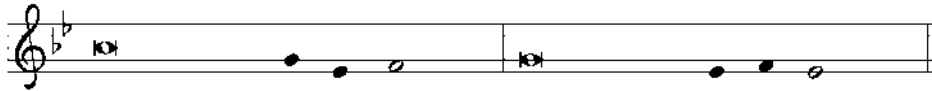
## CHILDREN'S SERMON

### FIRST READING

Isaiah 25:1-9 *(back cover)*

### PSALM Psalm 23

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



- <sup>1</sup> The LORD | is my shepherd;\*  
I shall not | be in want.**
- <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down | in green pastures\*  
and leads me be- | side still waters.**
- <sup>3</sup> He re- | vives my soul\*  
and guides me along right pathways | for his name's sake.**
- <sup>4</sup> Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall | fear no evil;\*  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they | comfort me.**
- <sup>5</sup> You spread a table before me in the presence of those who | trouble me;\*  
you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.**
- <sup>6</sup> Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of my life,\*  
and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever.**

### SECOND READING

Philippians 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

*Continued on next page...*

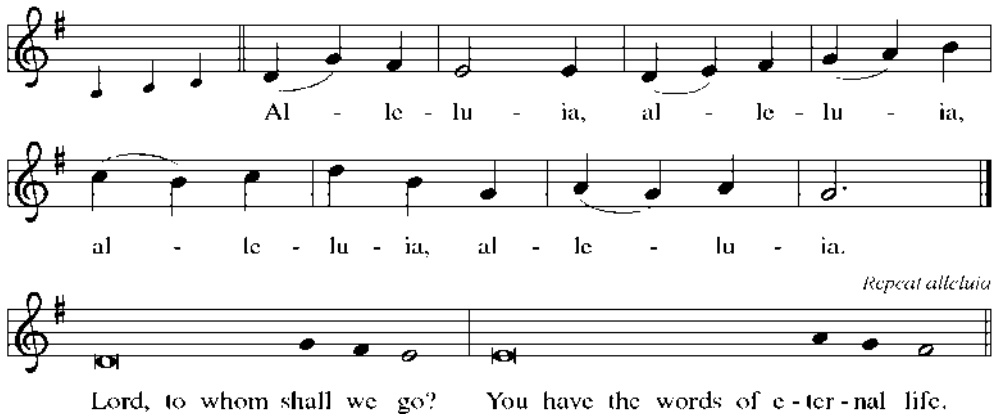
<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**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 22:1-14

*(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**

**APOSTLE'S CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.\***

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Let us pray for the whole people of God, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

Lord, we pray for the church in this and every land, grant that we may share the mind of Christ and strive to live together in peace. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for green pastures and still waters and all the beauty of the natural world, make the land flourish and humankind to live in right relationship with all that you have made. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world and all who hold positions of authority, put the desire to govern in accordance with your vision of justice, providing shelter and refuge to all in need, striving toward the goal of peace for all. We pray especially for Israel and Palestine, Ukraine and Russia. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are experiencing illness and grief, that they may be healed and comforted finding rest in your presence. (*We pray especially for . . .*). God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community of believers, that wherever there is conflict or discord, the love of Christ may keep us united and make us mindful of all that is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and excellent. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

In thanksgiving for the beloved saints who now rest in your mercy (*especially Teresa of Avila, teacher, renewer of the church*), that their faithful witness will guide us until the day we join them at your heavenly feast. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and amazing grace; 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*

**OFFERING** 8:00 AM *O Christ, You Are the Light and Day* Samuel Scheidt  
10:30 AM Handbells *For Beauty of the Earth*

*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.



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.*

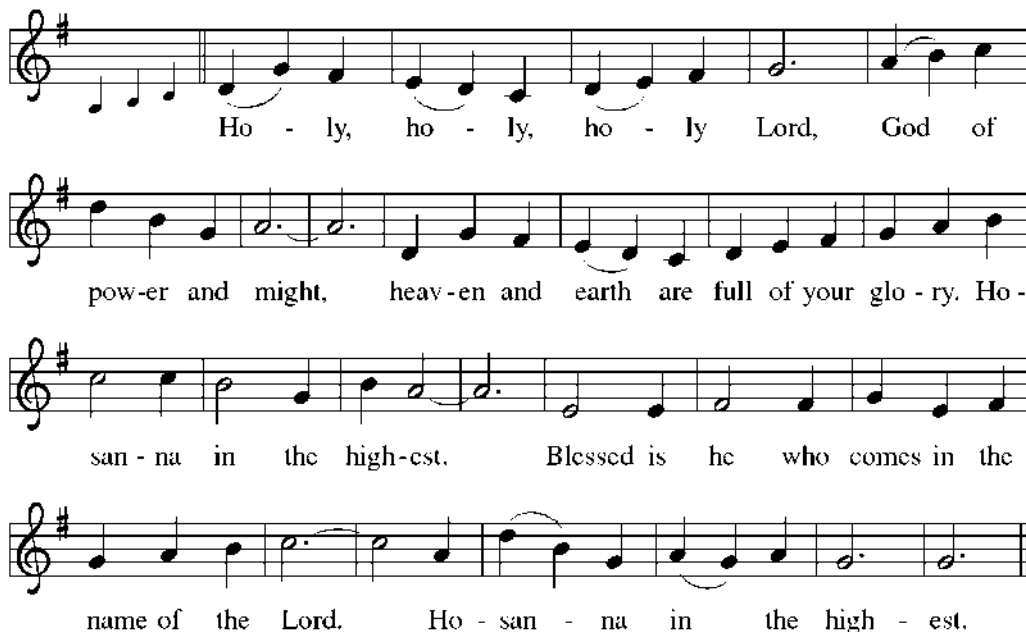
It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ;



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.*



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.

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**

**10:30 AM Chancel Choir** *Blest Feast of Love Divine* James R.K. Freeman

*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**

*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (ELW 836) next page*

## **DISMISSAL**

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

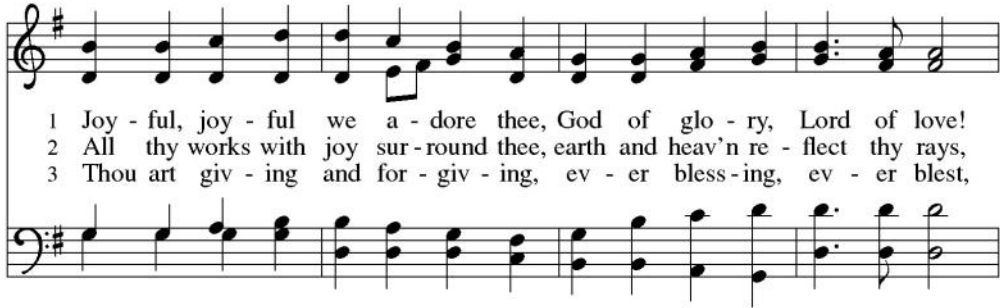
## **POSTLUDE**

*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*

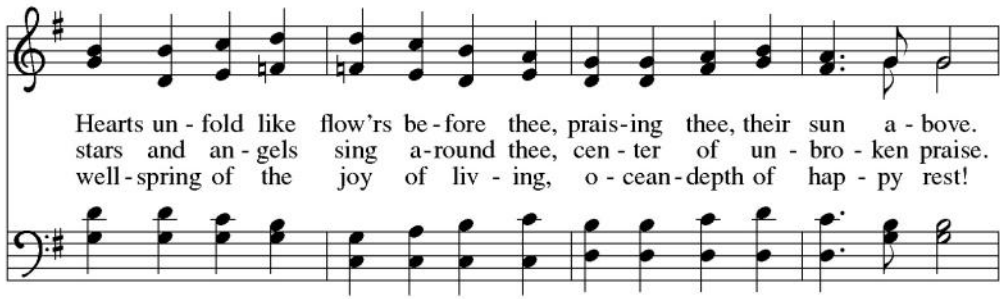
Charles Ore

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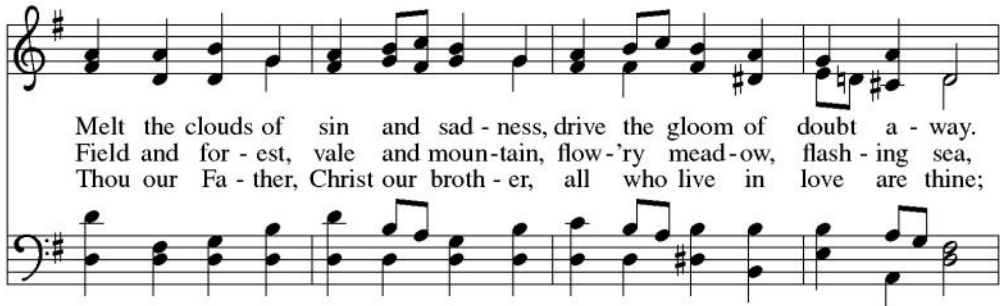
# Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee



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!



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 for this deeper look into Matthew! Tristan Ericson will facilitate and the class will meet in Christ Hall located on the main level.



### 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.**

### Save the Dates November 12 & 19!

**Witness Committee is providing for a new photo directory, one where you do not sit through the sales pitch!**

Gretchen Nevin, local photographer, will be at St. Paul’s on November 12 (7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) and November 19 (7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) to take photographs. The photographs/directory will be different than ever before: photos will be taken Sunday morning when you are at the church for services, each photo session will be approximately 5 minutes, there will be no salesperson to try to sell you photographs, and the photo’s will be sent to you as downloadable images. Arrangements will be made for those who don’t have a computer. Patee will receive downloadable images as well for our new directory which will be printed in house. Convenient, painless, and no cost to you except for a few minutes of your time. All we need is your smiling face. You will be able to reserve a time slot on line on [signupgenius.com](http://signupgenius.com) (St. Paul’s Directory Photos). Patee will send out a news blast with step by step directions on how to sign up and directions will also be in the November newsletter. If you don’t have a computer or have problems using signup genius, contact Earline Jones at 717-880-5208 and she will help to get you scheduled. It would be wonderful if we could get everyone to sign up.



Thanks,

Earline Jones, Witness Committee Chairperson

### *Serving the Lord with Gladness*

DATE	TIME	Assisting Minister	Crucifer	Lector	Communion Assistants	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Set-up & Clean-up
10/15	8:00 AM	Harold Sargeant	Denise Rider	Dale Smith		Jeff & Rose Riese	Ron Riese	Kathleen Lemke, Ann Anstadt
	10:30 AM		Larry Becker	Deb Becker	George Fitch	Tristan & Jessica Ericson, Mike & Becky Bingham	Dave Kopp, Sandy Dickensheets, Steve Heistand	Deb Becker, Isabelle Lehr

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

**Sunday, October 15—Newsletter Deadline**

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

**Monday, October 16**

7:00 PM Finance Committee—ZOOM

**Tuesday, October 17**

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

**Wednesday, October 18**

10:00 AM Preschool & Pastor—Nave  
10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ Hall  
11:30 AM Mpuguso Meeting

**Thursday, October 19**

10:00 AM Preschool & Pastor—Nave  
6:30 PM Handbell Choir—Christ Hall  
7:30 PM Chancel Choir—Music Room

**Sunday, October 22**

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist  
9:15 AM Brunch—Christ Hall  
9:15 AM Sunday School for All  
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist—Live Stream  
Children's Choir  
11:30 AM Luncheon—Fellowship Room  
6:30 PM AA meeting Community Rm

Please be sure to check with the church secretary  
*before* you schedule your meetings at the church.

**St Paul's is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church's Clothing Ministry.** 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 Good Shepherd room to collect any clothing you 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.

**Victor Fields** will be the guest organist with the Central Pennsylvania Symphony Orchestra in concert on Sunday, October 29, 3:00pm to be held in the sanctuary at First Lutheran Church, 21 S. Bedford St. in Carlisle. Tickets can be purchased on the Symphony website.



**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.



Vintage October Birthdays: Lynn Trout, Jim Flinchbaugh,  
Shirley Haugh, and Carl Jacobs.  
Be sure to wish them a Happy Birthday!

## **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.



### **THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Fellowship Committee is responsible for planning and coordinating social events designed to strengthen Christian fellowship among all members and to help our members become better acquainted with one another. There are a lot of new faces at St. Paul's. The Fellowship Committee is chaired by Linda Hanson and made up of 10 women who enjoy cooking and entertaining. During the months of June, July, and August, a member of the Fellowship Committee was available to oversee/organize the donations of food received from our members and other committee members and to have refreshments available each Sunday following

the Sunday liturgy. The Fellowship Committee prepares food for Second Sunday Sandwiches and congregational events as needed and is available to help families with funeral lunches if contacted. Contact Linda Hanson to join the committee.

### **THE MPUGUSO COMMITTEE**

The Mpuguso Committee assists St. Paul's Congregation in maintaining and strengthening its partnership with the Mpuguso Congregation in the Konde Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, our synod's companion diocese. The purpose of having a partnership relationship with a congregation in another part of the world is to learn more about the similarities and differences of Lutheran Christians around the world and, through sharing together and learning from each other, to grow in our faith and commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul's has hosted visitors from Mpuguso and other congregations in the Konde Diocese, and members of St. Paul's have visited at Mpuguso and other congregations and institutions in the Konde Diocese. St. Paul's has helped the Mpuguso congregation with several fund-raising projects to further its ministry: purchasing motorbikes and sewing machines, building a youth hostel, and most recently providing finances for them to build a new church building. For many of these projects, the members of the Mpuguso congregation and St. Paul's joined together in raising the necessary funds.



The committee meets monthly. We are seeking new members, especially younger members who will continue this long relationship. We will plan our monthly meetings around the schedule of all committee members. Meetings generally are under an hour in length. Time spent outside the committee varies with fund-raising activities and assignments accepted.

The photographs and digital images coming out of Jerusalem and Gaza are unsettling. Things have been untenable for years. The tensions, the misunderstandings, and the intentional deceptions are manifest in the images that appear on our screens. A recent interviewer asked the question to a series of learned persons, “how did we get here?” Those who work for think tanks, in the fields of diplomacy, and history scholars weigh in. It seems there isn’t any one answer. The responses are delivered with poise, conviction, clarity. The story lines all have to do with people, passion and stamina seeking their place in the world, or in this specific situation a portion of the earth tagged with the label “Holy Land.” The conclusion for me has to do with our human sin.

We don’t have any photographs appearing across the pages of Holy Scripture. We do have stories that capture the intense passion and stamina of God’s people seeking their place in the world. The images utilized this morning by the prophet Isaiah and the gospel writer Matthew are of feasting and banquettes. The stories entice us with tales of sumptuously feasting on a mountain or being invited to a wedding banquet. With each story, Isaiah’s mountain feast and Matthew’s banquet hall, there is something more to discover about our past and how it is that we have arrived as this place.

Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi identifies two strong passionate women, Euodia and Syntyche, who gave of themselves, their time, ability, and talent for the work of the gospel. In the biblical witness it is a rare thing when the names of women are included. Often they were overlooked or remained nameless. But when the name of a God fearing woman is included it signals to us that it is time to sit up and take notice. God is doing something unique, wonderful, often viewed from human perspective as outrageous.

While war rages on, and reporters ask questions in search of truth, we recall the story of how we arrived here. Not physically at the corner of South George Street and Springettsbury Avenue, but how it is that we are made one with God. How it is that we receive an invitation to the wedding banquet, are given a wedding robe, and are welcomed into the kingdom and given a place at the table. This story is important for all who think that they are pure and holy and just and true and right and honorable.

There is a strong passionate woman whose life and witness is critical to bring about the change needed for God’s people, for all humanity; a woman who links the feasting people on the mountain top with the man telling of the king desiring the wedding hall to be filled. The story is read periodically in worship during the season of Advent. In subdued candlelight often at vespers a lector drones on. *Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of...* This part of the biblical narrative is often overlooked, skipped over because who really wants to know who begat whom? Knowing how we got here is important. It is important that this not become unfamiliar story.

Isaiah provides the picturesque mountain setting. People who have won the victory are feasting at the expense of the losers. They have toppled their adversarial foes and are showing how fortunate they are with choice cut meats and decanted wines. But their foes, the people from a neighboring land, with a different dialect, with different religious convictions, the Moabites;



they are pushed into a cesspool, and try with all of their might to swim out of the thick crap, they can't muster enough strength or stamina to swim out.

Those verses are not generally read in our public assemblies. They are omitted from our won lectionary this morning. They are however appropriate in this climate of winners and losers, victors and the vanquished, the haves and the have nots, the aggressors and the avengers. "Make the divide as great as possible" seems to be the popular motto. Pit one group over another and make the divide cavernous. And then gloat about it.

Matthew provides the parable of the wedding hall. People have been invited but they cannot come. Or they simply won't come. The excuses are many. The king invites others so that the hall will be full for his son's wedding celebration. And when those guests arrive for the feast, one fellow will not put on the appropriate attire, he doesn't want to wear what the other guests are wearing, he wants to wear what he wants, and he gets cast out, where there is weeping and wailing. Not much different than the Moabites in the dung heap. When Jesus finishes telling the story, the religious authorities, the ones who see themselves as winners, victors, the haves of society, they plot to do Jesus in. They want to kill him.

Having grown up as the loser, the vanquished, the have not, the one from a different land with different dialect and different religious conviction enters Ruth. Ruth is a Moabite (part of the group swimming in the cesspool). Ruth takes on a leading role in the family tree of God's people.

Ruth is a woman looked down upon by others because she is a foreigner, a Moabite. She is a woman early in life to become a widow whose children predeceased her. From society's point of view she is as far down as it seems she can go. It is her steadfast love for her mother-in-law Naomi (who is Jewish and comes from a proper family) that changes Ruth's fate, and ours. It is a rare bond of love that she carries. She marries Boaz. I am sure there was much celebrating on their wedding day. But I suspect there was even more celebrating when they have a son. She gives birth, and here is where that Advent reading from vespers continues; to *Obed and Obed is the father of Jesse, and Jesse is the father of David*, the shepherd boy who becomes king and provides the genealogical link to a man named Joseph who takes Mary to be his wife and they have a son and they name him Jesus; for he will save the people from their sin.

And Jesus, now a grown man, in the context of this morning's gospel reading, he is in Jerusalem. He is in the last week of his earthly life. He is dealing with a group who love their gloating and fixing of cavernous divides and plotting to do in people whose stories are different, whose dialects are different, and whose theological convictions are different from their own. In a rare bond of love Jesus suffers death on a cross. He dies to save us from our sin; from the desire to put others in a cesspool, to do in those who differ from us, to gloat when things go our way, and seek out opportunity to put others down. This is an answer to the question "how did we get here?" The ancestral tree, our story holding together Abraham who received the promise of God, Ruth a Moabite, Jesus the savior of the nations, and us, who through the water of Holy Baptism are graphed onto Christ the tree of life. We are given a wedding robe, are invited to the table, and are promised a future, on that holy mountain where disgrace will be taken away. And we will feast at the heavenly banquet table with all whom God invites. Amen.

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 25:1-9**

O LORD, you are my God;

I will exalt you, I will praise your name;  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

<sup>2</sup>For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of aliens is a city no more,  
it will never be rebuilt.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

<sup>4</sup>For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade  
from the heat.

When the blast of the ruthless was like a  
winter rainstorm,

<sup>5</sup>the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the LORD of hosts will  
make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged  
wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged  
wines strained clear.

<sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.

<sup>8</sup>Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears  
from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take  
away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him,  
so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

**Psalm 23****SECOND READING: Philippians 4:1-9**

[not printed]

**GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14**

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ <sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

**Next Sunday's Readings:** Isaiah 45:1-7; Psalm 96:1-9 [10-13]; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22.

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