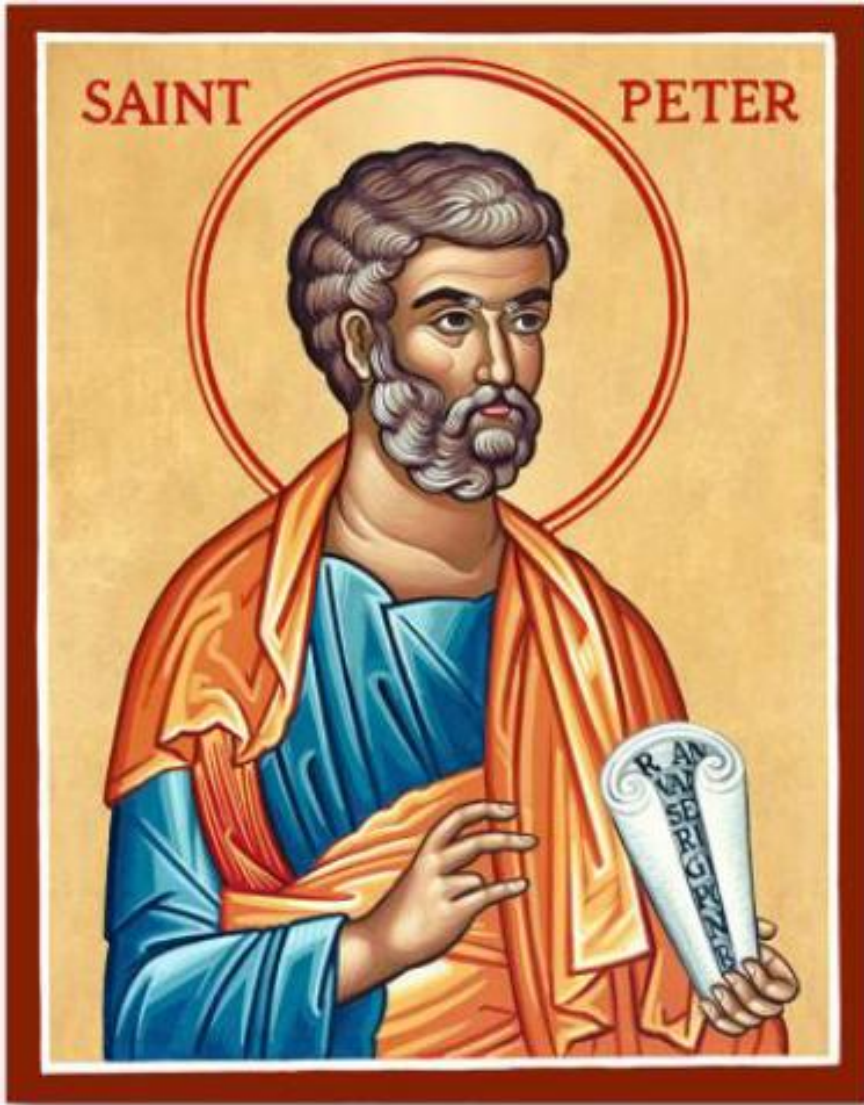


Confession of St. Peter
January 18, 2026



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 189 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 or use the QR Code provided.

Restrooms are located 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 restrooms are independent units. Please remember to latch the door.

An AED/Defibrillator unit is located in the Good Shepherd room. It is placed on the wall left side of the Springettsbury door exit.

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.

We ask parents to accompany their children to the restroom during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.



Lutheran Church in York, PA - St. Paul's Lutheran...

stpaulsyork.org



*The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God
in recognition of Food Pantry Volunteers*

| STAFF | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Pastor | Rev. Stanley Reep | st.paulsyork@comcast.net |
| Youth Director | Kelly Moore-Spencer | kmoorespencer.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Organist, Choir Director | Victor Fields | vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Bell Choirs Director | Leah McComas | lmccomas.stpaulsyork@gmail.com |
| Children's Choir Director | Juliana Jones | jjones.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |
| Secretary | Patee Pizzirusso | st.paulsyork@comcast.net |
| Sexton | Ted Weikert | tweikert.stpaulsyork@gmail.com |
| Preschool Director | Deb Becker | presch.stpaulsyork@comcast.net |

Confession of St. Peter

January 18, 2026

8:00 & 10:30 AM

Musical Setting #1 Evangelical Lutheran Worship

PRELUDE

How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds

Emma Lou Diemer

Stand

ENTRANCE HYMN

Christ is Made the Sure Foundation (ELW 645)

1 Christ is made the sure foun - da - tion, Christ, our head and
2 To this tem - ple, where we call you, come, O Lord of
3 Here be - stow on all your ser - vants, what they seek from
4 Praise and hon - or to the Fa - ther, praise and hon - or

cor - ner - stone, cho - sen of the Lord and pre - cious,
hosts, and stay; come with all your lov - ing - kind - ness,
you to gain; what they gain from you, for - ev - er
to the Son, praise and hon - or to the Spir - it,

bind - ing all the church in one; ho - ly Zi - on's
hear your peo - ple as they pray; and your full - est
with the bless - ed to re - tain; and here - af - ter
ev - er three and ev - er one: one in might and

help for - ev - er and our con - fi - dence a - lone.
ben - e - dic - tion shed with - in these walls to - day.
in your glo - ry ev - er - more with you to reign.
one in glo - ry while un - end - ing a - ges run!

APOSTOLIC GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

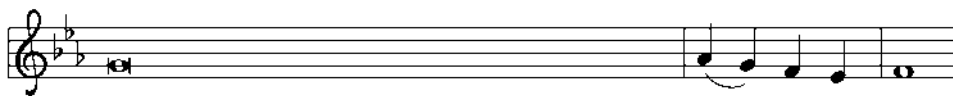
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



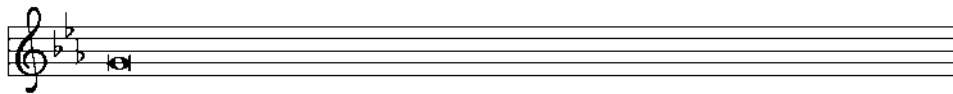
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



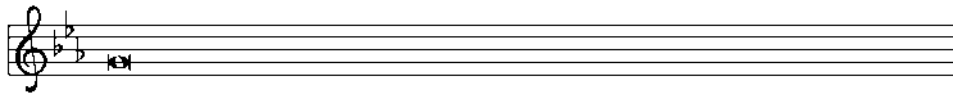
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



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



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

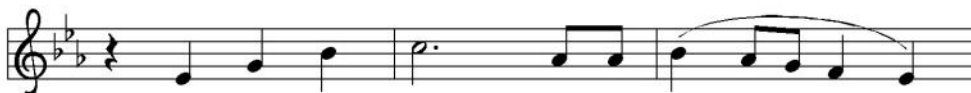


Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

HYMN OF PRAISE



Glo - ry to God in the high -



est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and



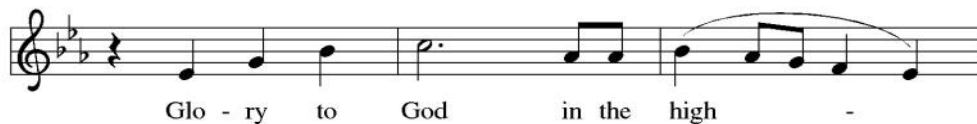
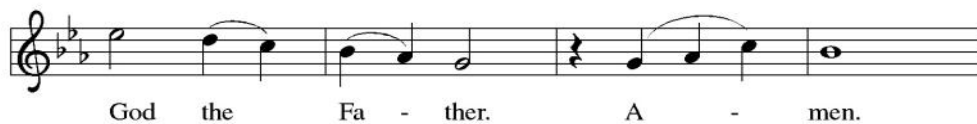
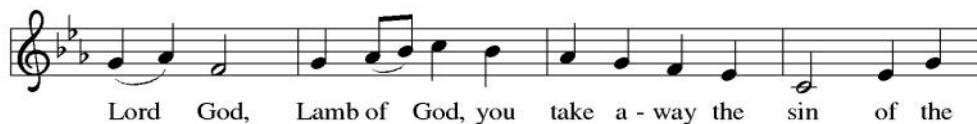
Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we



praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus



Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther,



PRAYER OF THE DAY.

Almighty God, you inspired Simon Peter to confess Jesus as the Messiah and Son of the living God. Keep your Church firm on the rock of this faith, that in unity and peace it may proclaim one truth and follow one Lord, your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sit

FIRST READING

Acts 4:8-13

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are being asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹ This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’

¹² “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.

PSALM Psalm 18: 1-7, 17-20

Spoken responsively

¹ I love you, O | LORD my strength,*

O LORD my stronghold, my crag, | and my haven.

² **My God, my rock in whom I | put my trust,***

my shield, the horn of my salvation, and my refuge:

You are worth- | y of praise.

³ I will call up- | on the LORD,*

and so shall I be saved | from my enemies.

⁴ **The breakers of death rolled | over me,***

and the torrents of oblivion made | me afraid.

⁵ The cords of hell en- | tangled me,*

and the snares of death were | set for me.

⁶ **I called upon the LORD in | my distress***

and cried out to my | God for help.

⁷ He heard my voice from his heav- | enly dwelling;*

my cry of anguish came | to his ears.

¹⁷ **He reached down from on | high and grasped me;***

he drew me out | of great waters.

¹⁸ He delivered me from my strong enemies and from those who | hated me,*

for they were too might- | y for me.

¹⁹ **They confronted me in the day of | my disaster;***

but the LORD was | my support.

²⁰ He brought me out into an | open place;*

he rescued me because he delight- | ed in me.

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

¹ I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

Stand VERSE

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

Repeat alleluia

HOLY GOSPEL Matthew 16:13-19

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

At the conclusion of the Gospel.
The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit SERMON

The Reverend Stanley Reep

Stand

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God
from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the
Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.
Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

A brief silence.

Gracious God, you gather the church into one great fellowship. Ewe thank you for your servant, Peter, and for his bold proclamation. Equip us to work together for justice and peace. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Sustain the web of life on this planet. Protect wild places, endangered species, and vulnerable habitats. Come to the aid of those affected by natural disasters (*current situations may be named*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Raise up prophets who speak truth to the nations. Embolden leaders and those in authority to advocate for people in need. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Bring an end to social injustice and inequities of every kind, so that all people may have abundant life. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Keep us mindful of our mission and guide our ministries in this community (*local minis-*

tries may be named). Kindle in us a desire to help one another. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Sustain all who are suffering sickness and adversity (*especially*). Grant them your healing word of wholeness. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We remember with gratitude the faithful departed who now rest in you. Especially we remember Martin Luther King, Jr. Strengthen us in faith and bring us at last to see you, face to face. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus 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 OF OUR GIFTS

8:00 AM *Arise and Shine in Splendor*

Johannes Brahms

10:30 AM Chancel Choir *Agnus Dei*

Charles Gounod

Stand

OFFERTORY

Create in Me (ELW 188)

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -
store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

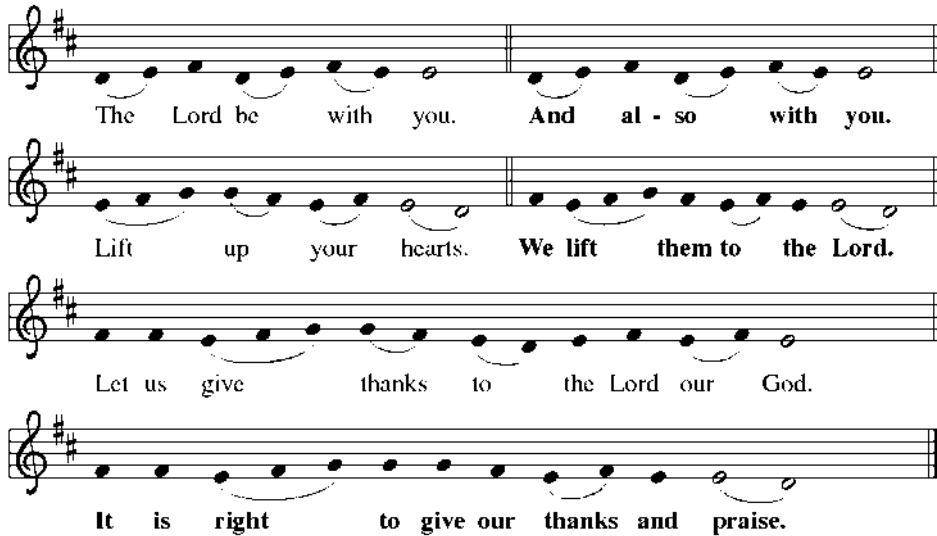
OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Blessed are you,

O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

DIALOGUE

Sung by Pastor and congregation



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

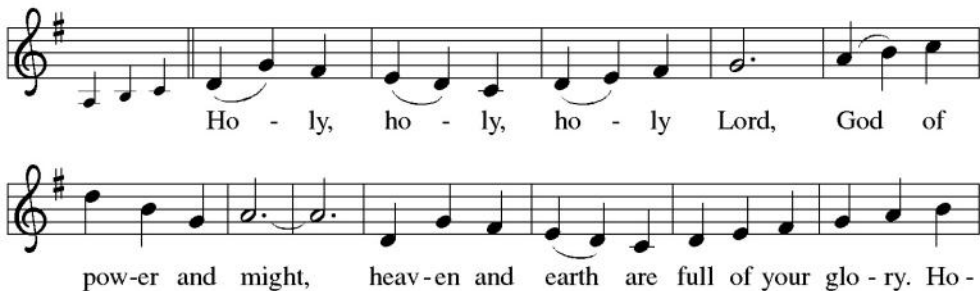
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through the great shepherd of your flock, Christ our Lord; who after his resurrection sent forth his apostles to preach the Gospel and teach all nations, and promised to be with them always, even to the end of the age. And so, with patriarchs and prophets, with the apostle, Peter, and with all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

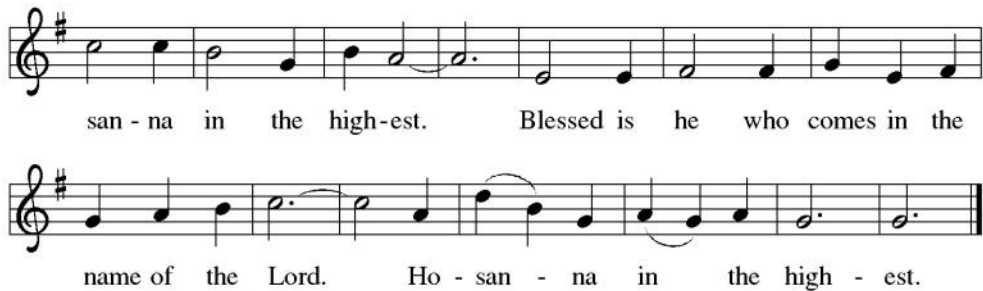
SANCTUS



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of

pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

Continued on next page...



THANKSGIVING

You are indeed holy, O God, the fountain of all holiness; you bring light from darkness, life from death, speech from silence. We worship you for our lives and for the world you give us. We thank you for the new world to come and for the love that will rule all in all. We praise you for the grace shown to Israel, your chosen, the people of your promise: the rescue from Egypt, the gift of the promised land, the memory of the fathers, the homecoming from exile, and the prophets' words that will not be in vain. In all this we bless you for your only-begotten Son, who fulfilled and will fulfill all your promises. In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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

Therefore, O God, with this bread and cup we remember the incarnation of your Son: his human birth and the covenant he made with us. We remember the sacrifice of his life: his eating with outcasts and sinners, and his acceptance of death. But chiefly [on this day] we remember his rising from the tomb, his ascension to the seat of power, and his sending of the holy and life-giving Spirit. We cry out for the resurrection of our lives, when Christ will come again in beauty and power to share with us the great and promised feast.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit, that we and all who share in this bread and cup may be united in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, may enter the fullness of the kingdom of heaven, and may receive our inheritance with all your saints in light.

Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.

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

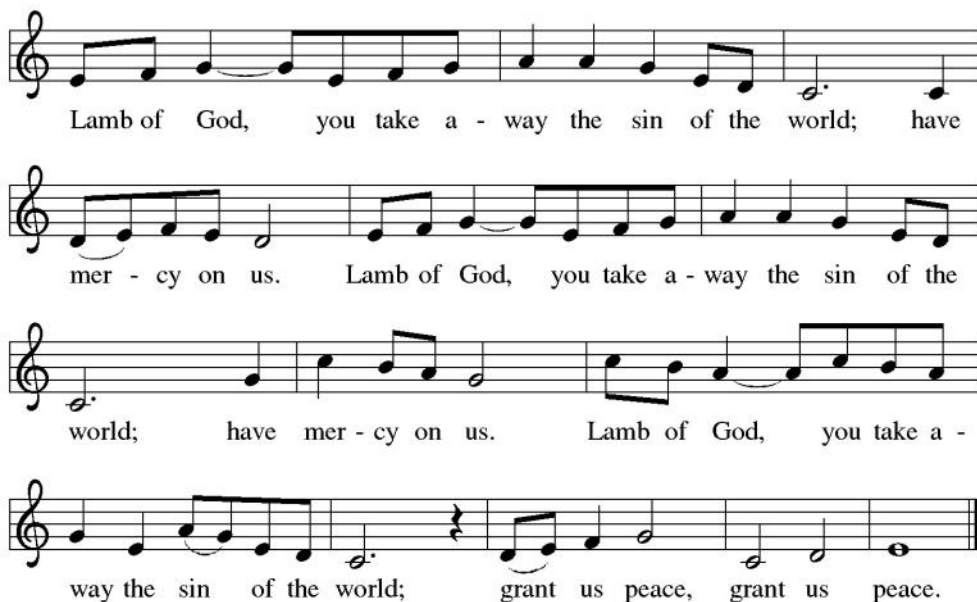
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

FRACTION *A brief silence is kept.*

AGNUS DEI



Sit

COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL


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

Procedure for receiving Communion:



- 1. Come to communion using the center aisle.*
- 2. Take a communion glass from the tray of glasses.*
- 3. Take your place along the chancel step.*
- 4. The ministers will bring the bread and wine to you.*
- 5. Place the used cup in an empty tray located on a credence table at the side aisle.*
- 6. Return to your pew using the side aisle*

COMMUNION HYMN

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less (ELW 5967)




1 My hope is built on noth-ing less than Je-sus' blood and righ-teous-ness;
 2 When dark-ness veils his love-ly face, I rest on his un - chang-ing grace;
 3 His oath, his cov - e - nant, his blood sus - tain me in the rag - ing flood;
 4 When he shall come with trum-pet sound, oh, may I then in him be found,



no mer-it of my own I claim, but whol - ly lean on Je - sus' name.
 in ev-'ry high and storm - y gale my an - chor holds with-in the veil.
 when all sup-ports are washed a-way, he then is all my hope and stay.
 clothed in his righ-teous-ness a-lone, re - deemed to stand be - fore the throne!




Refrain



On Christ, the sol - id rock, I stand; all oth - er ground is

sink - ing sand, all oth - er ground is sink - ing sand.



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. Almighty God, as we have commemorated St. Peter in this most Holy Sacrament you have brought us near to an innumerable company of angels, apostles, martyrs, and saints. Keep us in fellowship with them until at last we may attain to our eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

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

HYMN

Glorious Things of You are Spoken (ELW 647) next page

DISMISSAL

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

Sit

POSTLUDE

Built on a Rock

David Cherwien

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Visit from the Bishop

The Rev. Stephen Herr, Bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, will be with us NEXT SUNDAY, January 25, 2026 for both liturgies and a Forum at 9:15 AM in Christ Hall. We are delighted to have him as our guest.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Tuesday, 3 February 2026 6:30 PM

St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, Kingston Boulevard, York will host this year's prayer service. This is an opportunity for all Christians to gather for prayer; for the Christian witness, for deepening relationships, and drawing closer to Christ. Great effort has been made to include congregations from across the area. Pastor Reep will be taking a leadership role in the prayer service. Members of St. Paul's congregation are encouraged to attend. Because this is a Tuesday evening we will not have a Tuesday Bible study session. St. Joseph's has plenty of parking, is easily accessible. If you are unable to attend in person, set aside time at 6:30 PM 3 February to be in prayer for a stronger more vital Christian witness in our community and throughout the world.

Glorious Things of You Are Spoken

1 Glo - rious things of you are spo - ken, Zi - on, cit - y
 2 See, the streams of liv - ing wa - ters, spring - ing from e -
 3 Round each hab - i - ta - tion hov - 'ring, see the cloud and
 4 Sav - ior, since of Zi - on's cit - y I through grace a

of our God! He whose word can - not be bro - ken
 ter - nal love, well sup - ply your sons and daugh - ters,
 fire ap - pear for a glo - ry and a cov - 'ring,
 mem - ber am, let the world de - ride or pit - y,

formed you for his own a - bode. On the Rock of A - ges
 and all fear of want re - move. Who can faint, while such a
 show - ing that the Lord is near. Thus de - riv - ing from their
 I will glo - ry in your name. Fad - ing are the world's vain

found - ed, what can shake your sure re - pose? With sal -
 riv - er ev - er will their thirst as - suage? Grace which,
 ban - ner light by night and shade by day, safe they
 plea - sures, all their boast - ed pomp and show; sol - id

va - tion's walls sur - round - ed, you may smile at all your foes.
 like the Lord, the giv - er, nev - er fails from age to age.
 feed up - on the man - na which God gives them on their way.
 joys and last - ing trea - sures none but Zi - on's chil - dren know.

This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open Mon–Thurs 8:00 AM—4:00 PM Fri 8:00 AM—11:30 AM

Sunday, January 18

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
 9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
 10:30 AM Holy Eucharist —Live Stream
 11:30 AM Women's Group—Christ Hall
 6:00 PM Confirmation Class
 6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

Monday, January 19 Martin Luther King Day

Office Closed

6:30 PM Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 20

9:30 AM Pantry
 6:00 PM Create—Preschool thru Grade 6
 6:00 PM Bible Study

Wednesday, January 21

10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave
 10:30 AM Bible Study—Christ Hall

Thursday, January 22

Newsletter Deadline

10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave
 5:15 PM York College Cooking
 6:30 PM Handbell Choir
 7:30 PM Chancel Choir

Sunday, January 25

The Bishop's Visit

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

Serving the Lord with Gladness

| DATE | TIME | Assisting Minister | Crucifer | Lector | Greeters | Ushers - | Altar Guild | Bread Bakers |
|------|----------|--------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 1/18 | 8:00 AM | Jennifer Ports | James Palmer | Bob Reed | Nancy Banta, Palmer Family | Team 3E: Norma Shue, Cliff Beck, Sheridan Palmer | Lois Ann Schroeder, Kathy Monk | Abby Jacobs |
| | 10:30 AM | Janet Fitch | Anna Herdson | Tom Gibson | June Heistand, Alexis Heistand | Team 3L: Dan Garber, Joe Guarriello, Larry Becker | Ann Anstadt, Jill Striebig | Abby Jacobs |



Weekly Bible Study

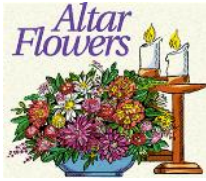
Tuesday Evenings 6:00 PM

Wednesday Morning 10:30 AM Christ Hall



Please remember to pick up your offering booklets for 2026.

They are in the Good Shepherd Room.



Altar Flower sponsors are needed for many dates in 2026.

Please check the flower chart in the Springettsbury foyer to sign up. Vases are \$40 each. Remember to fill out the form and slip it under the secretary's window.



Food Pantry Needs: St. Paul's Food Pantry needs **Whole Grain Cereal donations**. We give out 80 boxes of cereal each week and our sources for cereal currently have very little available.

Other Pantry Needs: Peanut butter, Plastic and paper shopping bags, Monetary donations. Monetary donations can be placed in a special" envelope. marked "Pantry".



St Paul's is collecting clothing for Union Lutheran Church's Clothing Ministry and your help is requested. Union's volunteers are very appreciative of our cooperation and our help. If you have large donations you may take them directly to Union Lutheran Church. Simply call them to arrange a time.



A Partnership Between Local Churches & LifePath Thrift Stores

New Year's resolution to clean out our closets? Please remember to donate your no longer needed items to LifePath Thrift Stores. The stores then return a portion of the value of these items in the form of gift cards to our church to help those directly in our care.



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



Valentines Dinner - Friday February 6

Once again the Witness Committee will be hosting an evening for our young singles and families in recognition of Valentine's Day. The event will be Friday, February 6 from 5:30 – 7:30 PM. Additional information will be in Invitations sent out via texts/emails. Be on the lookout!

The evening consists of a special dinner for the young adults and free child care in the Youth Room for children ages 3-grade 5. Miss Kelly and her helpers will give the children dinner and have activities for them in the Youth Room. Our young adults can enjoy dinner and conversation and time together while the children are having their own Valentine's Party. Great evening for all!

Confession of St. Peter January 18, 2026
Acts 4:8-13 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 St. Matthew 16:13-19

“Modern American Fiction” it sounded like an excellent choice for an elective. The title appealed to a college first-year student. Like most university courses, the titles of a class can be deceptive. They can have a catchy ring to them when you register for them only later to leave you questioning why you ever selected the class. Then there are other classes where the title is ordinary and dull, but the instructor makes the class so engaging that you cannot imagine why you did not rank it among your top choices. Occasionally you hit the jack pot and land a great sounding class and an enthusiastic professor.

That was the situation with my first-year literature class with Mrs. Johnson. It was a class you never wanted to miss. She made you believe that anything was possible and that grasping the fundamentals of literary analysis was the beginning of a joyful existence of discussion, debate, and conversation that would accompany you throughout your entire life. It was with Mrs. Johnson that identifying the “turning point” in each story became a standard part of all my future reading, stories, articles, and later church history and even the sacred scriptures. The “turning point” is the point in the story where a momentous change occurs, a decisive moment. There is a change in direction or motion. Once it takes place there is no turning back.

The “turning point” in the story is celebrated today. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah. Sure, it is a confession story, but in addition to that, it serves to move the listener from Jesus’ Galilean ministry to his journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die. With Matthew and his cohorts Luke and Mark, each of them has the confession of Peter as the “turning point” in the flow of their material. Jesus’ earthly ministry centers in Galilee. He teaches in Galilee. He heals in Galilee. He prays in Galilee. He is known to the inhabitants of the region of Galilee. When Jesus goes to Jerusalem it is for one purpose only, to suffer and be put to death.

This is radically different from the Gospel of John. John has Jesus going back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem as though he is a modern-day commuter needing an “Easy Pass.” John’s approach underscores that Jesus was a devout male Jew and as such he would have made a minimum of three trips to the Temple in Jerusalem annually. So, in John the turning point is different. Even when Peter gets his new nickname, Peter the Rock, it is different.

The turning point in Matthew’s gospel account has Jesus ask the disciples who people say that he is not to evoke a full range of opinions, or to enumerate a list, but to make a way for the disciple’s faith to come to expression. That is after all what Peter does. His faith comes into expression. He confesses Jesus as “*the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*” It will be through Peter’s preaching that he will open (keys) the doors of life for those who believe. Peter will have the joyful task of leading people into the

kingdom of God. And while Peter was bold to confess, alongside these positive aspects of faith, we also know that Peter was timid and denied his relationship to, and knowledge of, Jesus that night in the courtyard of the High Priest while warming himself by the fire. The text underscores the Divine disclosure, for whatever the reason, God has chosen Peter to preach and lead and guide and open the doors so that through faith others will give expression to who Jesus, the Messiah is, and what Jesus the Messiah does, and what Jesus the Messiah will do.

And that leads us to today. In our lives who do we say that Jesus is? I ask not to evoke a full range of opinions from those of us gathered here for worship, or to enumerate a list for publication on the web site or to hang as a banner on George Street. I ask to allow your faith to come to expression. Your faith to come to expression, for whatever reason, God has chosen you in Baptism to preach and lead and guide and open doors so that through faith others will give expression to who Jesus is, and what Jesus does, and what Jesus promises to do. The question posed “*Who do you say that I am?*” creates a sort of “turning point” in each of our lives. Moving us from where we have been, turning us away from sin and darkness and all that weighs us down, toward Jerusalem, the cross and resurrection, towards forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, love, and a new beginning in Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Peter was, as one translation put it, ordinary, uneducated, a common fisherman. He heeds Christ’s call and is with Jesus from the beginning through that dreadful trip to Jerusalem where Jesus will endure, suffering, death and he will bear witness to Christ’s joyful resurrection. Peter, in the book of Acts, exhibits a full expression of faith, a mature grasp of the working of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain him during the most challenging times. Peter was given the joyful task of preaching and opening and leading. To preach the “good news of Jesus” to open the door to life lived forgiven and to lead others to the joy of God’s kingdom where all are welcomed and fed and where hope abounds.

Today is a turning point for us. We are about halfway between the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the beginning of Lent. We are about halfway between the wise men making known the birth of the Savior and the Devil tempting Jesus in the wilderness. We are at the point where we hear that we are loved by God and forgiven through the work of God’s only begotten Son. A momentous change occurs through God’s divine choosing the likes of you and me. And we embark on a new tomorrow. In this moment we confess, like Peter, that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of the living God. We open ourselves to Christ’s teaching, his healing, his praying, and his journey to Jerusalem, to suffer and die, for us on the cross. To confess Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God permits our faith to come into full expression, extending good news, opening doors, and welcoming others into God’s kingdom. Amen.