A hand is shown from the right side, cupped and catching a vertical stream of water falling from above. The background is dark with soft green bokeh lights. The left side of the image shows a close-up of water ripples.

*Where do you
get that
living water?*

JOHN 4:11

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155

www.stpaulsyork.org

Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

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 190 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 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 which is accessed through the double doors front right.

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.

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

Parents, please 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.



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

stpaulsyork.org

STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
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March 8, 2026
The Third Sunday in Lent
Holy Communion 8:30 and 10:30 AM

8:30 AM	Organ	<i>The Inward Heart</i>	Gilbert Martin
10:30 AM	Handbell Choir	<i>Bread of Angels</i>	William A Payn

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen

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

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

KYRIE *sung 3 times*

Lord, have mer - cy, Christ, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy; have mer - cy, O Lord.

Stand

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

Let us pray. . . Eternal Lord, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your Word and obey it, so that we become instruments of your redeeming love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST READING

Exodus 17:1-7

¹From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" ³But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

PSALM: Psalm 95

spoken antiphonally pulpit side -odd verses/font side-even verses

- ¹ Come, let us sing | to the LORD;*
let us shout for joy to the rock of | our salvation.
- ² Let us come before his presence | with thanksgiving*
and raise a loud shout to | him with psalms.
- ³ For the LORD | is a great God,*
and a great King | above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand are the caverns | of the earth,*
and the heights of the hills | are his also.
- ⁵ The sea is his, | for he made it,*
and his hands have molded | the dry land.
- ⁶ Come, let us bow down and | bend the knee,*
and kneel before the | LORD our Maker.
- ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep | of his hand.*
Oh, that today you would hearken | to his voice!
- ⁸ Harden not your hearts, as your forebears did | in the wilderness,*
at Meribah, and on that day at Massah, when they | tempted me.
- ⁹ They put me | to the test,*
though they had | seen my works.
- ¹⁰ Forty years long I detested that genera- | tion and said,*
"This people are wayward in their hearts; they do not | know my ways."
- ¹¹ So I swore | in my wrath,*
"They shall not enter in- | to my rest."

SECOND READING Romans 5:1-11

¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely, therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Stand
VERSE

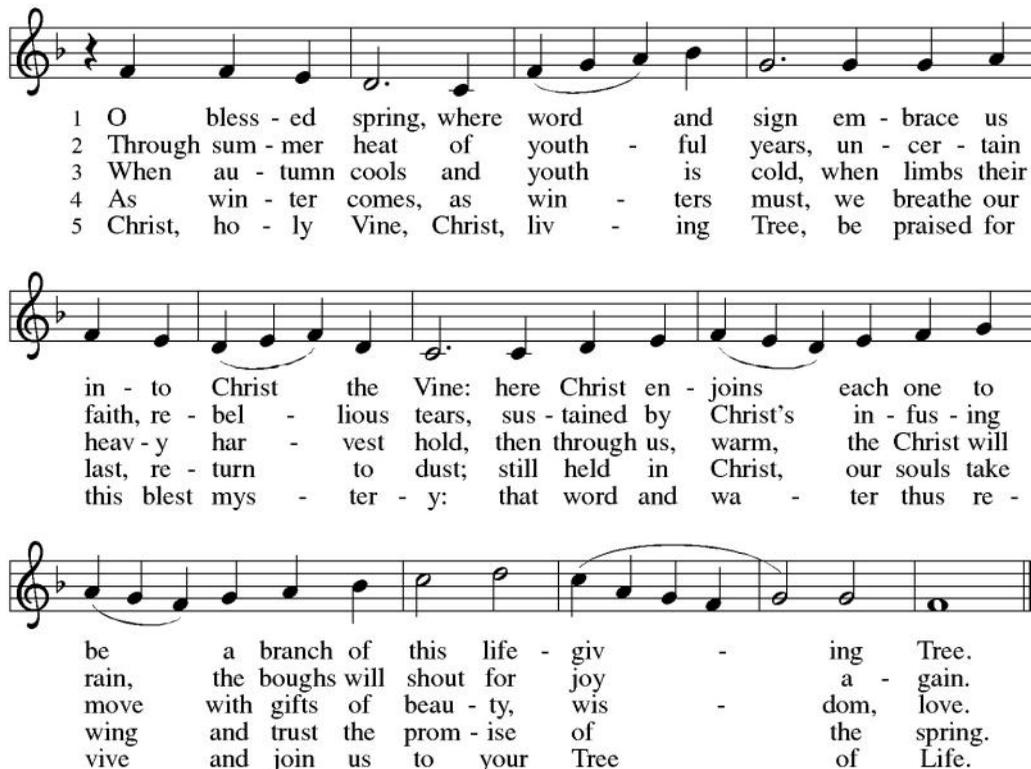


Let your stead - fast love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you prom-ised; we will trust your word.

HOLY GOSPEL John 4:5-42 (*back cover*)
The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**
At the conclusion of the Gospel.
The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sit
SERMON Pastor Reep

Stand
HYMN OF THE DAY *O Blessed Spring (ELW 447)*



1 O bless - ed spring, where word and sign em - brace us
2 Through sum - mer heat of youth - ful years, un - cer - tain
3 When au - tumn cools and youth is cold, when limbs their
4 As win - ter comes, as win - ters must, we breathe our
5 Christ, ho - ly Vine, Christ, liv - ing Tree, be praised for
in - to Christ the Vine: here Christ en - joins each one to
faith, re - bel - lious tears, sus - tained by Christ's in - fus - ing
heav - y har - vest hold, then through us, warm, the Christ will
last, re - turn to dust; still held in Christ, our souls take
this blest mys - ter - y: that word and wa - ter thus re -
be a branch of this life - giv - ing Tree.
rain, the boughs will shout for joy a - gain.
move with gifts of beau - ty, wis - dom, love.
wing and trust the prom - ise of the spring.
vive and join us to your Tree of Life.

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.

O God, preserve your church. Give to pastors, deacons, bishops, and all servants of your gospel the endurance that produces character and the hope that will never disappoint. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Sustain the earth. Send water to places languishing with drought and bring relief to places damaged by floods. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Softener our hearts. Quell hostilities between nations and peoples, and reconcile all humans across the lines of race, class, nationality, moral conviction, religion, and all else that divides or oppresses. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Comfort the afflicted. Show your mercy to any in need (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Send us your Spirit. Renew our hearts through worship and prayer and bless the work of our worship leaders and musical ensembles. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

O God, we rejoice in the promise of life with you. We remember all who have entered eternal rest, and cling to your promise of life eternal with you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation. **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.

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS

8:30 AM Organ *Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee* arr. Joyce Jones

10:30 AM Chancel Choir *Come to the Water* John Foley/arr. Jack Schrader

OFFERTORY

Return to the Lord (LBW setting II)



☞ Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,



slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Stand

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

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

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 Christ our Lord. You bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast. Renew our zeal in faith and life, and bring us to the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts 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'n and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING

You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God.

You are most holy, and great is the majesty of your glory.

You so loved the world that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

We give you thanks for his coming into the world to fulfill for us your holy will and to accomplish all things for our salvation.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his salutary command, his life-giving passion and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension, and the promise of his coming again, we give thanks to you, O Lord God Almighty, not as we ought but as we are able; we ask you mercifully to accept our praise and thanksgiving and with your Word and Holy Spirit to bless us, your servants, and these your own gifts of bread and wine, so that we and all who share in the body and blood of Christ may be filled with heavenly blessing and grace, and, receiving the forgiveness of sin, may be formed to live as your holy people and be given our inheritance with all your saints.

To you, O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory in your holy church, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.

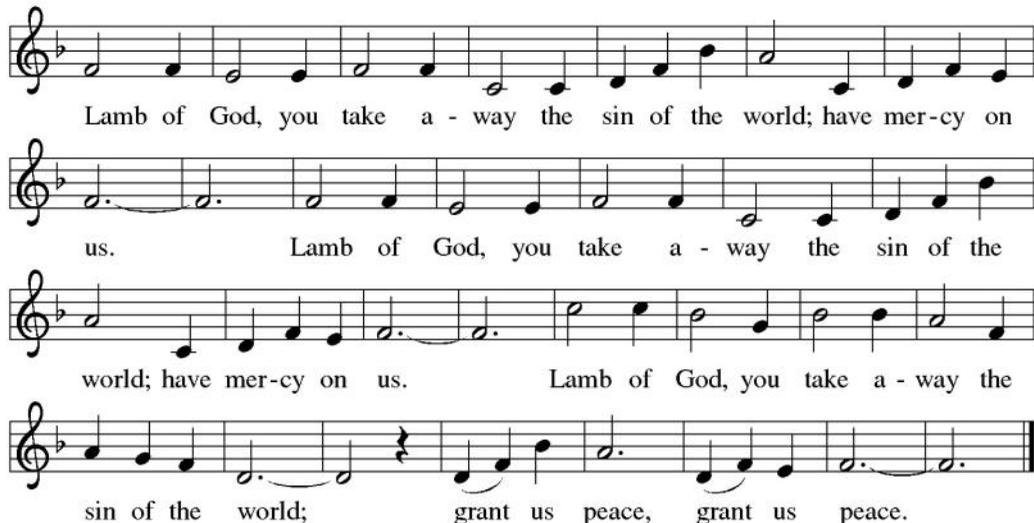
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

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



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

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 10:30 AM *What Wondrous Love is This (ELW 666)*



1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What
2 When I was sink-ing down, sink-ing down, sink-ing down, when
3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to
4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and



won-drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this
I was sink-ing down, sink-ing down, when I was sink-ing down
God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,
when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,



that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
be-neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a-side his crown for my
who is the great I AM, while mil-lions join the theme, I will
I'll sing God's love for me, and through e-ter-ni-ty I'll sing



soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?
soul, for my soul, Christ laid a-side his crown for my soul.
sing, I will sing, while mil-lions join the theme, I will sing.
on, I'll sing on; and through e-ter-ni-ty I'll sing on.

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE



Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been ful -



filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre-pared in the



sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the na - tions



and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Now, Lord, you let your ser - vant go in peace.

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

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

When Thou Art Near

J. S. Bach

St. Paul's Food Pantry Needs: Peanut Butter, Cereal, plastic and paper shopping bags, and monetary donations. Monetary donations can be placed in a special envelope marked "Pantry". Contact Teresa Rohrbaugh to volunteer for Tuesday distribution days. Contact Patty Snyder to volunteer for Thursday delivery days or Sunday stocking days or contact the church office. Thank you to all who help!

Becoming the Neighbors the World Needs—Sunday 9:30 AM Christ Hall

This new curriculum was prepared for Bridge of Hope. Co-author, Rev. William Snyder will be introducing two stories from the biblical witness which were selected to foster greater neighborhood involvement, understanding, and active participation working to end homelessness. The stories highlighted over the 5 Sundays in Lent are based on Luke 10:25-37 (the Good Samaritan) and four chapters in the book of Ruth 1:16-18, Ruth 2:8-13, Ruth 3:9-11, and Ruth 4:13-17. These two narratives will provide a lens through which we can better understand ourselves, God, and our neighbors. We pray that together we are becoming the neighbors the world needs. Join us in Christ Hall on Sunday at 9:15 AM. beginning February 22nd.

Wednesday Mid-Week Lent

The Seven Petitions of the "Lord's Prayer"

Soup, Salad & Bread Supper, Christ Hall 6:00 PM

Vespers with Preaching, Church Nave 7:00 PM



The Wednesdays of Lent offer opportunities to strengthen Christian witness through fellowship and prayer. A simple supper of soup, bread and salad, will be held in Christ Hall at 6:00 PM. A sign-up sheet is located on the stand in the Good Shepherd Room. If you are willing to bring some of the things needed for the weekly supper simply sign up so we know that which items are covered. Additionally we need a few volunteers to help set up and clean up following the meals. We will need at least three crock pots of soup for each week. Following the supper evening Prayer, Vespers, will be held in the church nave at 7:00 PM. We will be using the service from Lutheran Book of Worship with a few modifications. We have invited the congregations of Christ York, Grace York, St. Peter's York, and Christ Manchester to join us.

The Property Committee invited the original engineer along with our local HVAC systems maintenance company to the church to explore ways to reduce our energy consumption. Our system has been recalibrated. Note that during the heating cycle temperature throughout the building will be 68° and during the cooling cycle 74°. Please dress accordingly. We hope that this will reduce consumption as well as lower our utility costs.



2026 Flower Chart—The 2026 flower chart is posted on the Springettsbury vestibule bulletin board. **The cost of each vase is \$40 per vase.** Simply complete the flower form, make a check payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church and mark it altar flowers, and slip it under the office window. You can also contact the office to reserve a date, and to provide all of the correct information for inclusion in the Sunday bulletin. All information for the bulletin needs to be received by Wednesday morning of the previous week. This is a great way to honor someone, celebrate a milestone in life, or remember a loved one. The flowers may be taken home with you at the conclusion of the 10:30 AM liturgy or you may have them given to someone who is sick, shut it, or hospitalized. *Please note that there are no flowers during the season of Lent.*

Experimental Trial Worship Time

If there was something that you could do to increase involvement in the life of the congregation, would you do it? Would you try it? Would you give it a chance?

That was the question posed to the participants at the annual retreat held in January by committee chairpersons and congregation council members. The desire is to continue with an early worship service opportunity and one that will permit greater participation. By adjusting the Sunday schedule, from 8:00 to 8:30 AM, it is hoped that we can accomplish several things:

- Increase attendance by moving from 8:00 AM and starting at 8:30 AM. This may be appealing to families who regularly move out the door shortly after 8:00 AM during the week. This eliminates a half hour wait between Sunday worship and Sunday school. While the education time is scheduled at 9:15 AM the reality is that folks arrive at 9:30 AM. Worshipers can move directly from worship to Christian Education.
- Increase available parking for the 10:30 AM liturgy. By making the early worship time a bit more appealing for schedules this has the potential of freeing up parking spaces for those who arrive later in the morning. The 10:30 AM liturgy is often the time when we experience individuals and families visiting St. Paul's having more parking options would be beneficial. Currently 8:00 AM averages 35 and 10:30 AM averages 125.
- By evening out the participants across two service times, we increase the potential number of people available to serve. This will ease the burden currently experienced at the early service time.
- When there are 70 or more people in the church the energy in the room changes. This is most noticeable for the preaching task, both the one preaching and those who listen. The acoustics in the room change.

After significant deliberation the Council decided on **an experimental trial worship time of 8:30 AM (moving the 8:00 AM liturgy one half hour) from March 1st through May 17th.** This will provide a time to hear responses, see if we are moving toward the desired hopes, and have time to plan accordingly for the 2026-2027 academic year. **The start time of the second liturgy will remain at 10:30 AM.**

For additional information or questions regarding this decision, please contact any member of the Congregation Council.

Sunday, March 15 York County Junior and Senior Honors Choir 5:30 pm

The York County Honors Choir will present their season finale concert. Comprised of auditioned choral students from junior and senior high schools throughout York County, these are some of the finest young singers who love to perform.



Greeters will be needed for this concert and all future concerts. You will **not** be required to set up or clean up before or after the event. Your duties are to guide people to the nave and/or restrooms, etc... You will need to arrive 1/2 hour prior to the event and stay until all the guests have left. If you are interested in representing our church as part of the Hospitality Team please contact Patee at the church office.

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, March 8

8:30 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
9:15 AM New Members Class—Pastor's Office
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist —Live Stream
11:30 AM Women's Retreat Planning Mtg
Community Rm
11:45 AM 2nd Sunday Sandwiches
6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

Monday, March 9

7:00 PM Finance Committee—ZOOM

Tuesday, March 10 Council Reports due

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

Wednesday, March 11

10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor—Nave
10:30 AM Bible Study— Christ hall
4:30 PM Lenten Watercolors with Pastor Reep
6:00 PM Lenten Dinner
7:00 PM Lenten Vespers
7:30 PM Mpuguso Mtg

Thursday, March 12

6:30 PM Handbell Choir
7:30 PM Chancel Choir

Sunday, March 15 Easter Flowers Orders due

8:30 AM Holy Eucharist
9:15 AM Sunday School for All Ages
9:15 AM New Members Class—Community Rm
Lower level
10:30 AM Holy Eucharist —Live Stream
5:30 PM York Jr & Sr Honors Choirs Concert
6:30 PM AA Meeting—Community Rm

Watercolor Painting Class—3 Sessions Remain—Wednesdays in Lent—4:30 – 6:00 PM

Pastor Reep is offering a watercolor class during the season of Lent. "*Lenten Watercolors*" will be held in the Youth Room on the Upper Level. Middle school students, through adults, are welcome to participate. Bring any supplies that you may have for the first session. If you don't have supplies, we will supply things for the first week and then you may seek out supplies. The remaining Wednesdays are March 11, 18 & 25.

St. Paul's Women's Retreat, April 18, 8:30 AM-4:30 PM. Come for a day of rest, a time to get away from the business of daily life, to renew old friendships and build new ones, and to deepen your relationship with God. Sign up by completing the registration form you received in the mail. Forms are also located near church exits. Contact anyone from the planning committee with questions: Janet Fitch, Julianna Jones, Kat Lemke, Patty Snyder. Or call the church office.

Lent 3 A, 2026

Exodus 17:1-7

Romans 5:1-5

John 4:5-42

Early last week an oil painting of “Zacharia in the Temple” was confirmed to be painted by Rembrandt. It was officially recognized as a painting belonging to the renowned artist. It had been out of circulation since 1960. It was purchased and then kept private until recently, when it was brought in for cleaning and authentication. The painting will now be on display at the museum in Amsterdam.

With any great painting, in this situation, a depiction of Zachariah, the one married to Elizabeth, the ones who were not able to conceive until the angel of the Lord visited and announced that Elizabeth will give birth to John the Baptist, a painting depicting Zachariah in the temple studying the scriptures dressed in the finest raiment. It is a classic Rembrandt. The canvas mostly deep dark tones with the figure highlighted and bathed in a glow of intense light. The room is sumptuously painted with heavily patterned velvet fabrics and metal objects reflecting glints of light. From the picture the viewer can grasp many aspects of life, character, occupation, age, and expression. The picture depicts Zachariah after receiving life giving news from the messenger of God. The painting captures a moment in time, a moment of divine drama, the hint of light in the upper right-hand corner of the canvas captures the trail of light left by the heavenly messenger, and the expression on Zacharia’s face communicates the joy of a future.

Today the picture before us may not be in the form of an oil painting of a great master, but it is a portrait of a women who encounters Jesus. She is a Samaritan. She is foreign because Jesus entered her land and her region. She has a bucket and has come to a well to draw water. The picture is bathed in brilliant hot noon time sunlight. An intensity of such magnitude that one might desire shade for one’s eyes. The shadows cast by the figures; Jesus and the Samaritan woman, are almost nonexistent with the sun so high in the sky.

Encountering Jesus was life giving to the Samaritan woman. So much so that the physical water needed for daily life and living was abandoned at the well. She returned to her village to tell everyone about Jesus. *“He told me everything that I had ever done.”* For some of us this wouldn’t be heard as good news. Can you imagine having someone tell you everything that you have ever done? The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman was held privately. It was a conversation that didn’t lead to condemnation but rather to life. The woman was so amazed by Jesus that she wanted to tell others. Could he be the Messiah? Could the man at the well indeed provide life giving water to people whose lives are all but dried up?

This stranger who shows up at the well at the hottest hour of the day asking for a drink is the one from whom all of life flows. He is the one who gives living water, life giving water, baptismal water, washing away sins and granting forgiveness to people who are parched and are all but dried up. He knows firsthand what we have done and what we have left undone. He knows that others would rather condemn than offer absolution, clemency, pardon, or grace. Jesus is opening the kingdom of God to all people. He selects historic hostel communities and opens conversation and pours forth life giving water. Outsiders become followers, people with sketchy pasts are welcome, historic divisions are put aside; salvation isn't just for a few insiders who neatly follow rules. Jesus is causing a tumult. He makes those whom he calls think anew, think again, move beyond what is charted and known into what is unknown and challenging. And in so doing people come to believe.

It is Christ's life-giving Word that gathers us here this morning. We are moving from darkness to the brightest part of the day. We are welcomed, conversations take place, divisions broken down, forgiveness is granted, peace is shared, water flows from the side of our crucified Savior and gushes forth into our lives. Others come to believe through your testimony and mine. They experience something of God's saving word through us. "Come and see" exclaims the Samaritan woman.

In a world of darkness, more often like a canvas painted by Rembrandt, than one bathed in the brilliant light of the Risen Lord, it is challenging to identify encounters that are life-giving. Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman are spoken in broad daylight. His life-giving message is granted so that all may come to believe. Come and see. Jesus is the Savior of the world.

FIRST READING: Exodus 17:1-7 [not printed]

Psalm 95

SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-11 [not printed]

GOSPEL: John 4:5-42

[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,'¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."²² You

worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.²³ But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.³⁶ The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

Next Sunday's Readings: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41.

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