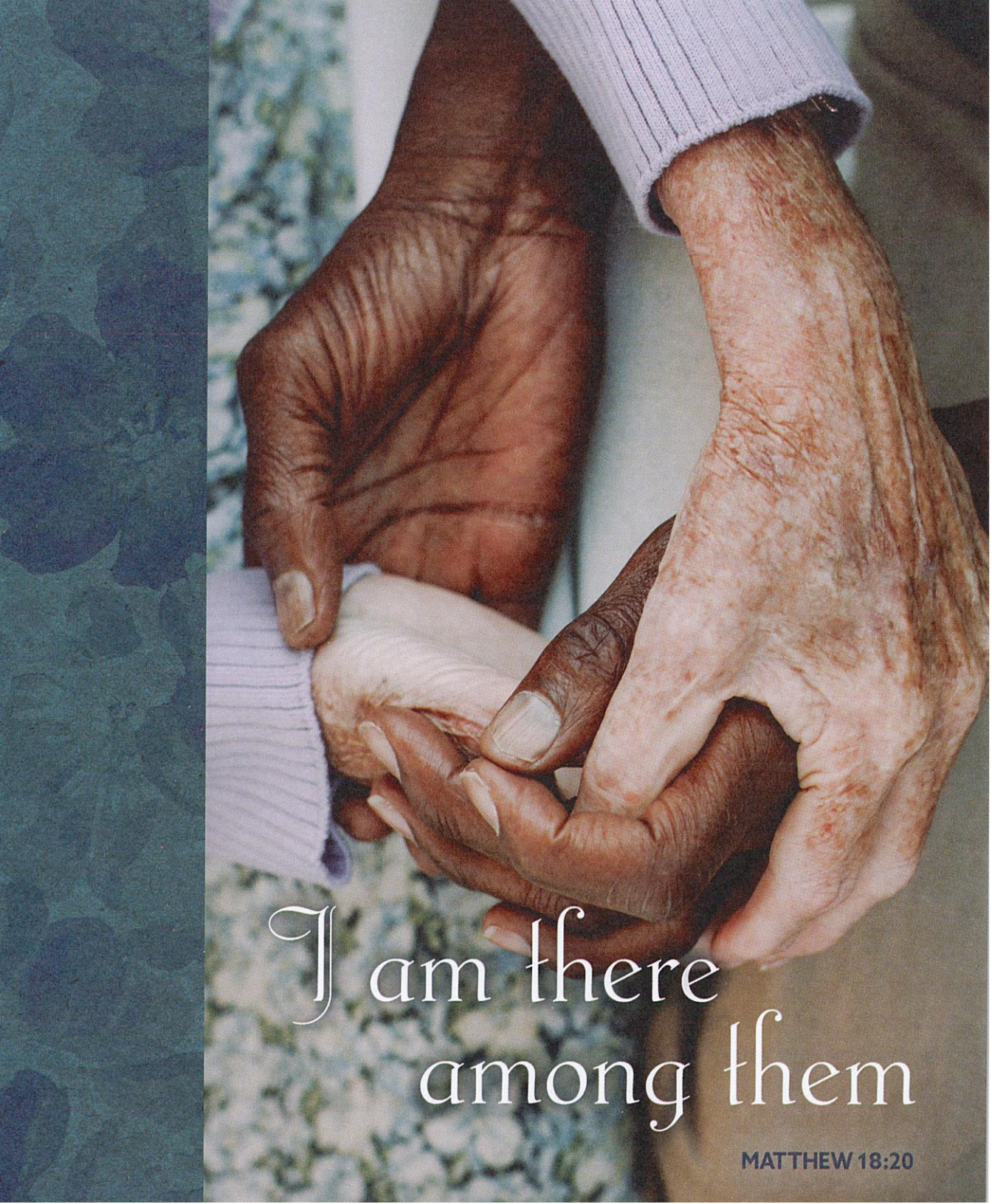




I am there
among them

MATTHEW 18:20

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

25 W. Springettsbury Ave., York, PA 17403

Church Office 717-843-8155 Email: st.paulsyork@comcast.net

Website: 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.

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

Restrooms are available in the Good Shepherd Room (Springettsbury Ave) 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.

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

The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God and in loving memory of my wife Kristine and for our 60th wedding anniversary on September 10th by Larry Gross.

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Visitation Pastor	Rev. Doctor Dan Yeiser	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	Julianna 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

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 6, 2026

Holy Communion 9:30 AM

Musical Setting 3 Evangelical Lutheran Worship

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

All Things Bright & Beautiful
Naomi Patterson, piano

William H. Monk

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,

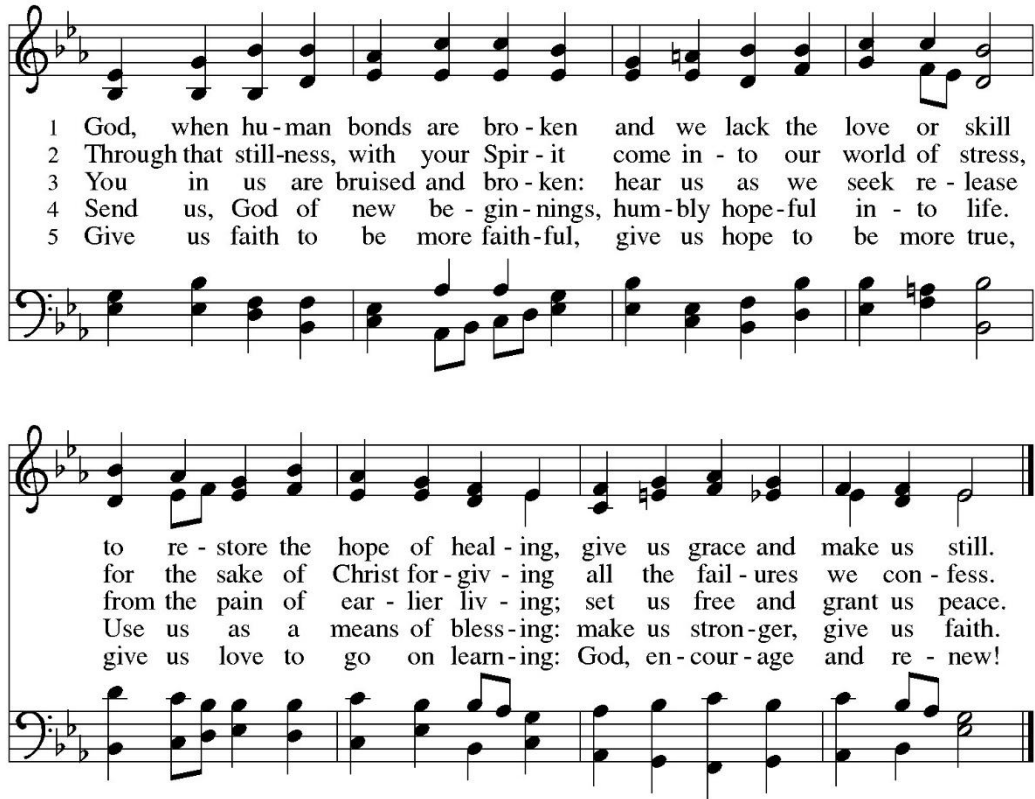
we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, 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

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

Amen

ENTRANCE HYMN *God When Human Bonds are Broken (ELW 603)*



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

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

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON

FIRST LESSON

Ezekiel 33:7-11

back cover

PSALM **Psalm 119:33-40** sung unaccompanied cantor/**congregation**

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

SECOND LESSON **Romans 13:8-14**

back cover

Stand

ALLELUIA



HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20

(back cover)

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew
At the conclusion of the Gospel.
The Gospel of the Lord.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON

Pastor Stanley Reep

Stand

APOSTLES' 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 in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

A brief silence is kept.

God, our Father, empower your church throughout the world to announce the words you give us. Open us to receive your word with joyful expectation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Renew the cycles of your creation providing for the needs of all. Protect grasslands, marshes, swamps, and all places of transition. Heal communities crying out after disaster (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Turn all who create, enforce, or interpret legislation away from selfish gain and toward your desire of good for all, especially the good of all who labor. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Awaken in us a yearning to care for those in need. Restore broken relationships, failing health, frayed emotions, and the hurts we carry with us. (*We pray especially for . . .*) Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Resolve conflicts in this community through your righteousness and grace. Reconcile us to each other, making your good news known even through our imperfections. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

All who die in faith have life with you. We give you thanks for the nearness of your salvation for (*name/s, and*) all who have gone before us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly

grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils that surround them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray trusting in your mercy through your Son, 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 OF OUR GIFTS

Melanie Patterson, piano

Holy Bible, Book Divine

Jesus Loves the Little Children

William Bradbury

George F. Root

Stand

OFFERTORY

Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the
brim our cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the
seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.
Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the
prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,
and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Merciful Father,

we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered 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.

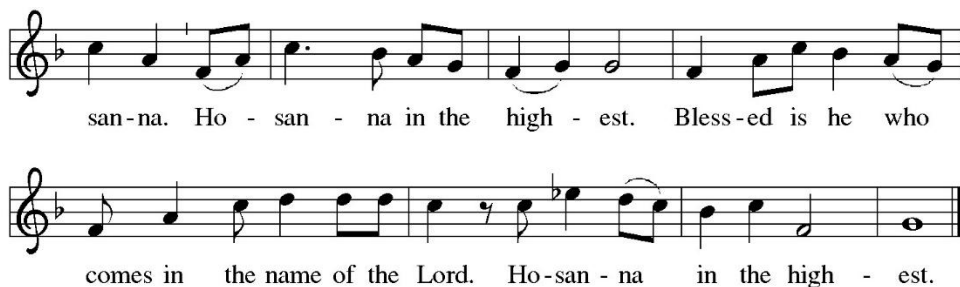
PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is said.*

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; 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 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'r and might,

heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



THANKSGIVING

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all your people in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor 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 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 RITE

When we eat this bread, we share the body of Christ. When we drink this cup, we share the blood of Christ.

**Reveal yourself to us, O Lord, in the breaking of the bread,
as once you revealed yourself to your disciples.**

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.

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. We receive communion by common loaf and pouring chalice.

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

Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether (ELW 470)

1 Draw us in the Spir-it's teth - er, for when hum - bly
2 As dis - ci - ples used to gath - er in the name of
3 All our meals and all our liv - ing make as sac - ra -

in your name two or three are met to - geth - er,
 Christ to sup, then with thanks to God the giv - er
 ments of you, that by car - ing, help - ing, giv - ing,

you are in the midst of them. Al - le - lu - ia!
 break the bread and bless the cup, Al - le - lu - ia!
 we may be dis - ci - ples true. Al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Touch we now your gar - ment's hem.
 Al - le - lu - ia! so now bind our friend - ship up.
 Al - le - lu - ia! We will serve with faith a - new.

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

Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace (ELW 716)



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



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



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

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sit

POSTLUDE

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

Jacob Weber

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This Week at St. Paul's

Church office open Tues–Thurs 8:00 AM—3:30 PM, Friday 8-11:30 AM

Sunday, September 6 9:30 AM Holy Eucharist – Live Stream 10:30 AM Summer Fellowship 6:30 PM AA Meeting-Community Rm Monday, September 7 Labor Day Office closed Tuesday, September 8 Council Reports due to Church Secretary 9:30 AM Food Pantry 6:00 PM Bible Study Wednesday, September 9 10:30 AM Bible Study – Christ hall	Thursday, September 10 6:30 PM Handbell Choir 7:30 PM Chancel Choir Sunday, September 13 9:00 AM Fellowship – Good Shepherd Rm 9:00 AM Chancel choir rehearsal – Music RM 9:30 AM Holy Eucharist – Live Stream 10:45 AM Faith Formation – for all 10:45 AM Confirmation Class – Lower level classroom 12 noon Youth Group -Youth Rm 1:00 PM Victor Fields concert rehearsal 6:30 PM AA Meeting-Community Rm
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St. Paul's Food Pantry Needs: Peanut Butter, Cereal, plastic and paper shopping bags. 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!

A Partnership Between Local Churches & LifePath Thrift

Stores 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. Donate at three locations: 2414 Eastern Boulevard, 283 West Market Street, and in the South York Plaza. Give them the name and address of our church. Donors are still able to take advantage of the tax-deduction with every gift to LifePath Thrift Stores.



St Paul's collects clothing for **Union Lutheran Church's Clothing Ministry** and your help is requested. Union collects 'gently used' clothing (and shoes) for its clothing closet and offers it **free of charge** to needy families in the York City community. A bin has been placed in the 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. If you have large donations you may take them directly to Union Lutheran Church. Simply call them to arrange a time.

Beginning on 13 September we will extend the 9:30 AM Sunday Worship time followed by Education (Sunday school) at 10:45 AM through the end to the calendar year. During this extended time the Christian Education Committee will be asked to monitor participation in Sunday school, the Worship & Arts Committee will be asked to monitor worship and participation by the faith community. Additionally, ways to identify parking, especially for guests, families and elderly will be sought out to ease that aspect of accessing St. Paul's.

Called for Service, Peace, Instruction & Renewal the theme for the 2026/27 stewardship emphasis highlights four aspects of our baptismal life. Work is underway now in preparation for our fall events. Helpers are needed. If you would like to aid in this important work, please notify the church office. There are many aspects to the campaign; preparing print materials, writing skits, actors for the skits, coordinating a “Thank You” dinner, cooking, setting up, cleaning up and providing Temple Talks. Please prayerfully consider how you can share your gifts for the building up of the faith community. Then, call the office and get specifics on how to help.

Calling all crocheters and knitters. Last November we gave out over 200 scarves to our pantry shoppers. It’s time to start making scarves again for November 2026. The only suggestion is that scarves are about 4 ½ - 5 feet long and about 6 inches wide. When you finish a few scarves, put them in the pantry shopping cart in the Good Shepherd Room with your name on the bag. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who provided the amazing scarves. Let’s see if we can surpass last year’s number! This year the Blessing of the Scarves will be held on Sunday, November 8, prior to the distribution on November 10.



The Unitarian Church on S. George St. supplies our pantry with fresh vegetables. They are asking for help in their garden. If you can donate some of your time to help please contact Steve Converse at 717-577-6696.

Confirmation Ministry: With the extended 9:30 AM worship time through year’s end the Christian Education Committee, in consultation with the parents of confirmation students, class will now meet on Sunday morning from 10:45-11:45 AM. The class will be held on the Lower level in Room 004.

Sunday School for Children: The children will gather for class following the 9:30 AM liturgy on the Lower level in Room 005. This space should accommodate our larger class size. Children may proceed directly following worship. Snacks will be available in the Lower level outside rooms 004 and 005 (but not 007!).

Serving the Lord with Gladness									
DATE	TIME	Asst Min	Crucifer	Comm Asst	Lector	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Guild	Bread Bakers
9/6	9:30 AM	Larry Moore	Denise Rider		Scott Herdson	Sharon Diaczum,	Team 3L: Dan Garber, Joe Guarriello, Larry Becker	Ann Anstadt, Jill Striebig	Ann Anstadt
9/13	9:30 AM	Patty Snyder	Tom Gibson	Rev. William Snyder	Rev. William Snyder	Sandy Dickensheets, Dan & Kathy Garber	Team 1E: Jeff Riese, John Monk, Alex Bastian, Claudia Deitrich	Ann Anstadt, Jill Striebig	Norma Shue

Presentation of Bibles Sunday September 13

During the rite of Holy Baptism we promise that as the child grows, we will place in his or her hands the Holy Scriptures and provide for instruction in the Christian faith. This year we will be presenting Bibles to children in kindergarten, grade 4, and grade 7. The kindergarten students will receive a story Bible designed for their age featuring beautiful illustrations and content that captures the important stories as building blocks of faith. Those entering grade 4 will receive the Adventure Bible designed for young readers providing helps, illustrations and interesting facts. Students in grade 7 begin their catechetical program and receive a high-quality study Bible. It is an edition that will aid them in their study during the next two years of confirmation class as well as an ongoing resource for their adult participation in Christian life and living.

Concert, Sunday, September 27 Victor Fields, organ 3:00pm

Come and hear St. Paul's organist present a recital of music for organ and instruments with Mabel Tang, violin, Jeffrey Phelps, cello featuring selections by Bach, Dupré, Franck and The King of Instruments, A Parade of Music and Verse for Organ and Narrator by William Albright featuring actor Jay Poff.

Music & Create begins September 15, 6:00 PM

Age 3 through grade 6

Welcome back to Music and Create! We are looking forward to this opportunity for our families with young children to engage in music, art, and Bible stories while also having the opportunity to connect with other families. The program is designed for children ages 3 through grade 6. We divide the children into two age groups, age 3 through grade 1 and grade 2 through grade 6.

Do you love to sing? Our CHANCEL choir needs you!

We are looking for joyful voices to help lead worship this year. No prior experience is required—just a willing heart. Tenors and Basses especially needed!!

If you would like to lend your voice for a Sunday or two, or more, a sign-up sheet to designate when you can help is available on the stand in the Good Shepherd room.

REHEARSALS begin September 10

- Rehearsals: Thursdays at 7:30-8:30 PM and Sunday at 9:00 AM prior to worship
- Contact: Victor Fields, vfields.stpaulsyork@comcast.net or see him at church

Proper 18 A, 2020**Ezekiel 33:7-11****Romans 13:8-14****Matthew 18:15-20**

Sacred texts gave form and shape to Ezekiel's life. Just as the Bible today gives form and shape to our lives. In the days of Ezekiel, it was those first books of the Bible as we now know it that shaped his thinking, proclamation, and action.

Ezekiel relied upon the book of Exodus (22:21-22, 25-27) and its importance for life and living in relationship with God and with one another as he carried out his work as God's messenger.

We know the book of Exodus mostly as it relates to the move from bondage and captivity under the Egyptian Pharaoh, crossing the Red Sea, and the giving of the law as stated in the Ten Commandments. But Ezekiel had a deeper grasp of the law and how it shaped relationships. He paid attention to the sacred texts and they influenced his life.

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.

If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep?

These are God's laws. This section of the book of Exodus has a heading placed by the editors; *Social and religious laws*. I suspect that for the most part we don't spend much time contemplating religious biblical laws, the regulations that give shape to our daily life and living. We are Lutheran's; people who pride ourselves on grace. We are more familiar with Paul's letter to the Romans advocating love of neighbor.

However, as Lutheran Christians we are also a biblically literate people. We are people who delve into the scriptures and use them to interpret scripture. That's why we prepare for Sunday school and make certain that our children become acquainted with the biblical witness. Brother Martin Luther himself found this endeavor to fill up nearly every waking hour of the day. (That is why his beloved wife Katie did all the work and allowed him to wage reformation.) These religious laws are exemplary for us as we read from the Prophet Ezekiel. They provide a part of the backstory for making sense of the present story and the reality in which we find ourselves in these current days.

Every good story has a turning point. The turning point is critical to the whole story, and the book of Ezekiel is no exception. The turning point is the fall of Jerusalem. Now to fall you must have experienced; some height, some prestige, some recognition about who you are, where you have come from, what makes you different, what makes you stand out from all the others. And part of what made God's people stand out from all the others, is that Israel's God is the protector of the legally defenseless. That God stands with the resident alien the sojourner in the land. That God positions himself with the orphan and widow and the poor.

These are the religious attitudes and actions that set Israel apart from the others, from the countries that surrounded them, and what established them providing a vibrant reputation. These religious laws gave shape to their society.

Now back to our turning point. These things had all but fallen by the wayside. God's people paid little if any attention to the legally defenseless, didn't provide for the needs of the orphan, widow or the poor among them. There was so much more that was appealing, calling

them, stroking their ego. When Ezekiel lamented to God and cried out to the people to turn from their wicked, sinful ways, his words fell on deaf ears. Notice their wicked, sinful ways, had to do with their neglect of God's laws, regulations, in the care and provision for the least among them. People didn't want to hear about how far they had fallen, how their reputation was soiled, how they had forgotten the days in Egypt and the years spent eking out life and living in a place that was not theirs. But now at this turning point, at this critical moment, Ezekiel is banned from addressing his fellow Israelites. If you don't like what the messenger is saying about you, then silence him. This is a time of crisis. Ezekiel knew it. He recognized the signs; exorbitant interest being charged in the markets, lack of care for widows and orphans, sojourners being put out of the country, and the only thing being protected was the wicked way of life that had taken possession of them.

Ezekiel is doing ministry in a time of crisis. Ministry during a time of crisis is complex and burdensome. It is tough creating awareness that will lead people to appropriate action. Most of us would run from such a task. Ezekiel knows that to have any meaningful kind of life it involves association with God. And to have association with God one needs to be living obediently to the "life giving laws" of God. (The text is cited in Exodus.)

So, turning, a turning point in the story, a turning point in your life, Ezekiel reminds us that *God does not desire the death of sinners (wicked) but rather that we turn from our sinful (wicked) ways and live*. In the Gospel reading it is stated in language of binding and loosening. Turning is a matter of doing rather than aspiring or hoping or longing or even wanting something more, something other than the present situation in which you and I find ourselves. Turning is a matter of doing. It is action.

We hear this portion of the text most often in the large extended confession of sin on Ash Wednesday. Where we tell God and one another that we are going to take up the disciplines of lent; prayer, fasting, almsgiving.

For 40 days we are going to pray more, eat less, and give enough so that someone else can have a life.

Early in ministry as an exercise for the stewardship committee, as an example of giving, generosity, I asked folks to use the dollar amount of their weekly offering to purchase groceries in their home for that week! There was a lot of belly aching (and not because they were fasting)!

We are "all in" on Ash Wednesday stating as a matter of fact how we want to turn our lives around. And the turning comes with the doing of God's law which is also God's grace. The example from Exodus; restoring the poor man's pledge, returning stolen property, standing with the poor and needy, helping the legally defenseless, and making sure that people aren't swindled out of having a pair of pajamas when it is time for bed. These all require doing, being active, engaging on behalf of others, which leads to a new way of life and living for the one doing these very things.

This liberating teaching that Ezekiel was on about as messenger of the most-high God is all about removing burdens of the past and opening up the possibility of a different future.

Ezekiel remembered that Israel's God is the protector of the very ones that are being given the short end of the stick, or worse, no stick at all. The liberating teaching that we proclaim is how the most-high God is all about removing burdens of the past and opening to us the

possibility of a different future through his Son, Christ Jesus. Jesus comes on the scene and the first words proclaimed in a time of crisis are “repent” turn, live differently, love abundantly, give generously, transform life. Turn.

We are in the presence of the Lord this morning. He comes among us, forgiving us from past burdens and opening up the possibility of a different future with him, with one another and with our neighbors. Christ Jesus through his own death and resurrection graciously provides a way for us. But the turning took action, doing, on his part. He took up the cross, was beaten, suffered and died, was buried, and was raised up on the third day, to make a way. Through Jesus there is a turning point in the story; in your story and mine, of life before when we lived for self, and life now taking up the cross living for others.

Ezekiel was silenced, banned from speaking out about how far God’s people had fallen. The fall of Jerusalem is a turning point. Christ Jesus gives us opportunity to turn and live. Every good story has a turning point. Ours is possible through the love of Christ Jesus. Amen.

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11

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

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

Psalms 119:33-40

SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

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

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20

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