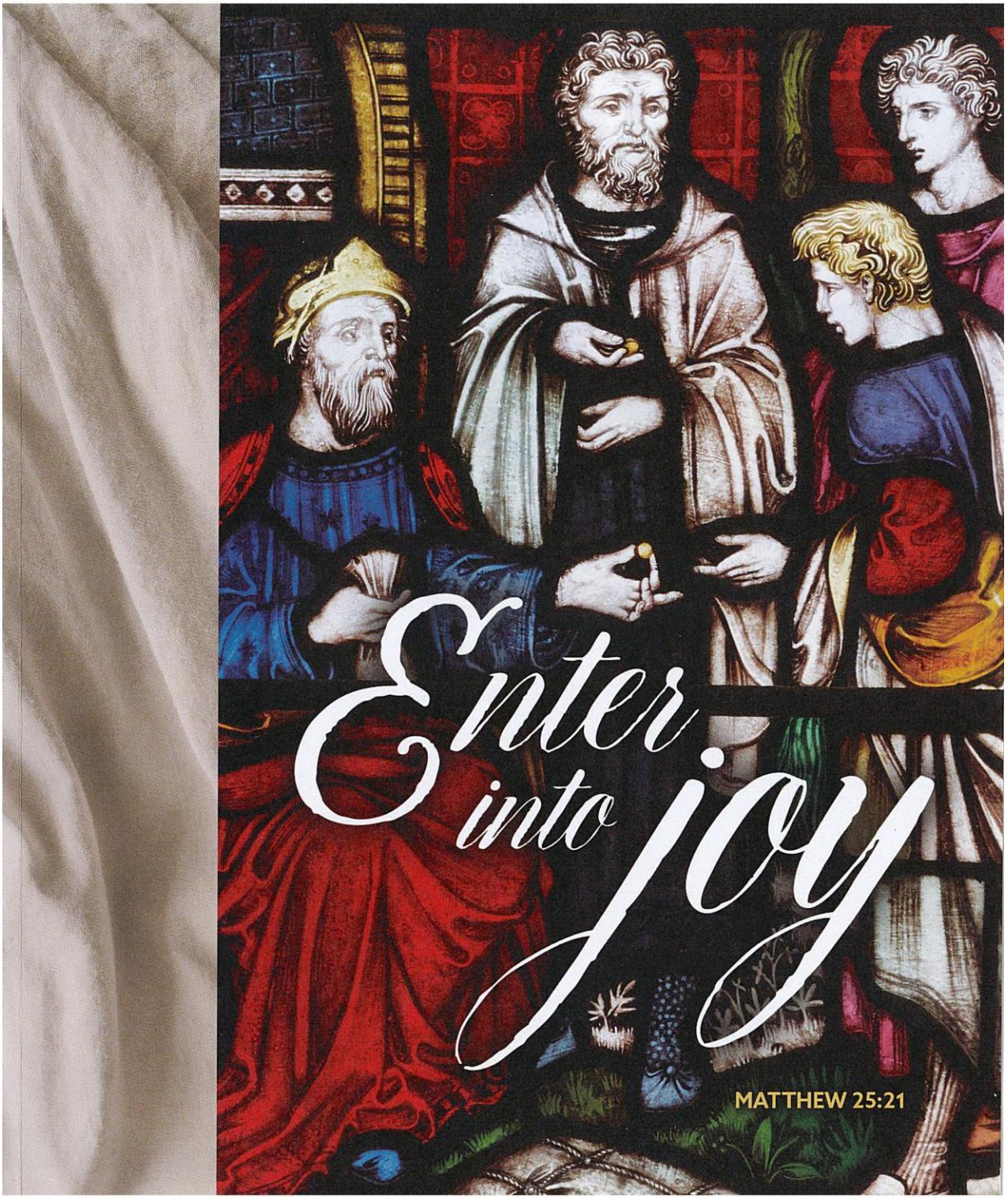

Enter into Joy
MATTHEW 25:21

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.

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

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 Narthex restrooms during the liturgy and wait with them. This is a way for us to practice good safety protocol within our building.

The altar flowers are presented to the Glory of God in memory of Andrew Glessner

STAFF		
Pastor	Rev. Stanley Reep	st.paulsyork@comcast.net
Visitation Pastor	Rev. Dr. 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

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost
November 15, 2026
Holy Communion 9:30 AM

Musical Setting 9 Evangelical Lutheran Worship

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *All Things Bright and Beautiful* Keith Kolander

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,

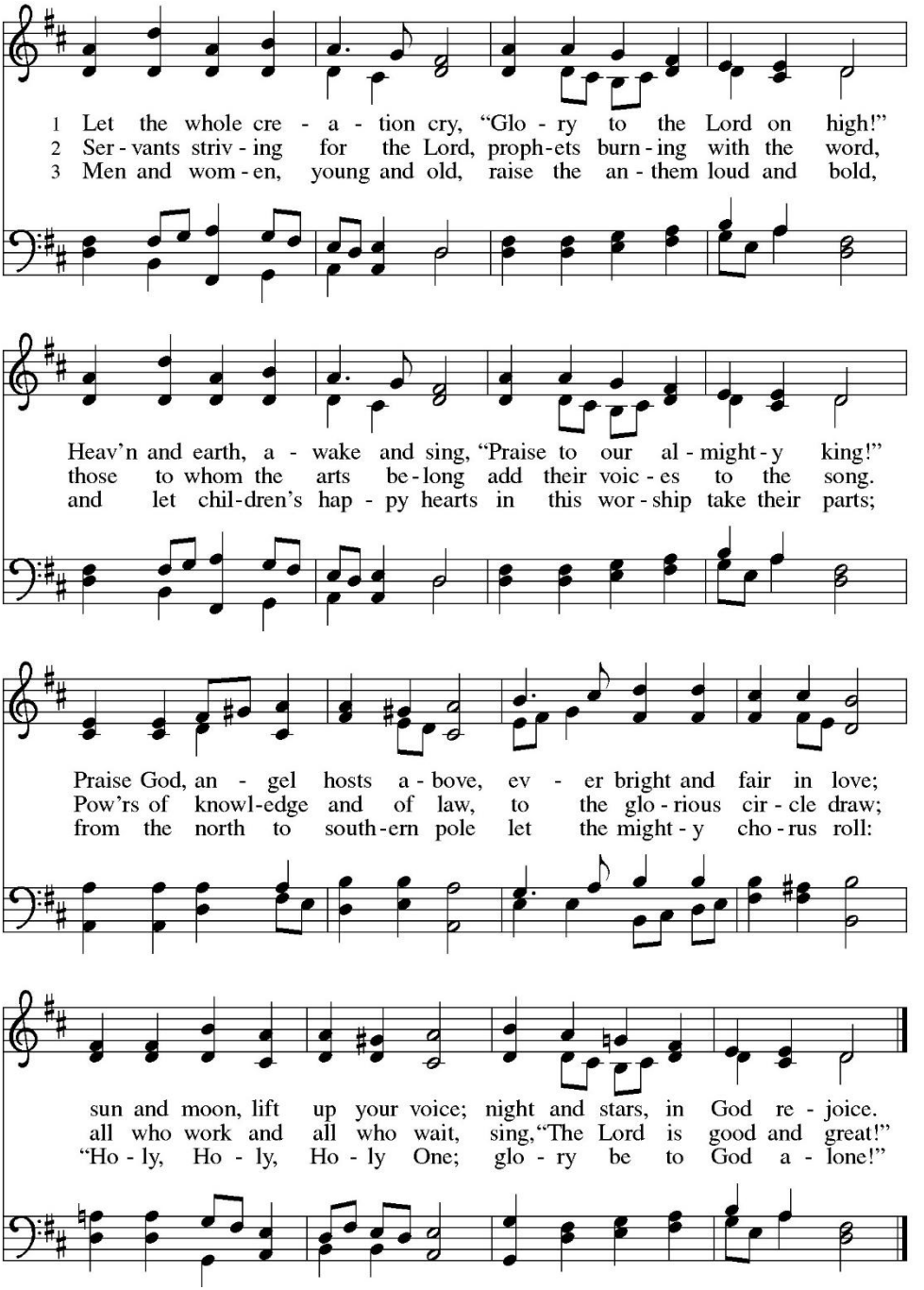
we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, 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 ***Let the Whole Creation Cry (ELW 876)***



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

Let us pray. . . Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people to seek more eagerly the help you offer, that, at the last, they may enjoy the fruit of salvation; through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Sit

CHILDREN'S SERMON Pastor Reep

FIRST READING Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

7 Be silent before the Lord GOD, for the day of the LORD is at hand!
The LORD has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated his guests.
12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who
settle like dregs in wine, those who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do
good, nor will he do harm."
13 Their wealth shall be plundered and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant
vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.
14 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of
the LORD is bitter; the warrior cries aloud there.
15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and
devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty
battlements.
17 I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because
they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust and
their flesh like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's
wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed, for a full, a
terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

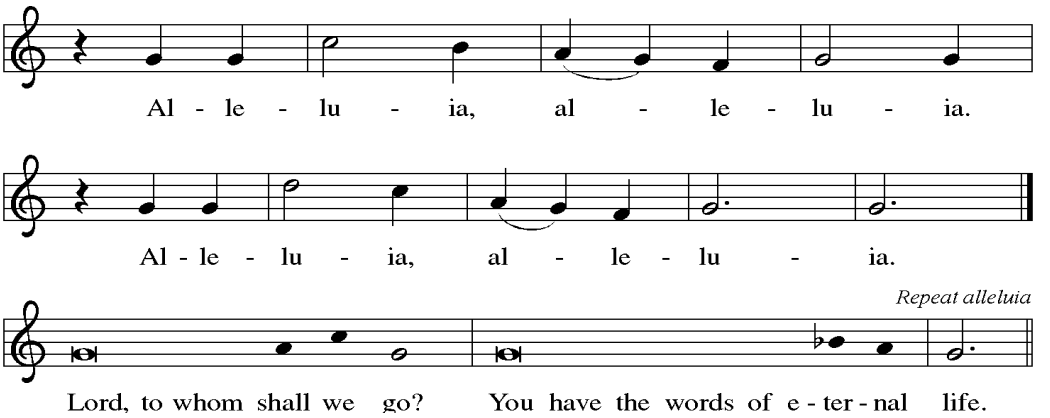
PSALM Psalm 90:1-12 sung unaccompanied cantor/**congregation**

1 Lord, you have | been our refuge*
from one generation | to another.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the | earth were born,*
from age to age | you are God.

3 You turn us back to the | dust and say,*
"Go back, O | child of earth."
4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when | it is past*
and like a watch | in the night.
5 You sweep us away | like a dream;*
we fade away suddenly | like the grass.
6 In the morning it is | green and flourishes;*
in the evening it is dried | up and withered.
7 For we consume away in | your displeasure;*
we are afraid because of your wrathful | indignation.
8 Our iniquities you have | set before you,*
and our secret sins in the light | of your countenance.
9 When you are angry, all our | days are gone;*
we bring our years to an end | like a sigh.
10 The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength | even eighty;*
yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow,
for they pass away quickly and | we are gone.
11 Who regards the power | of your wrath?*
Who rightly fears your | indignation?
12 So teach us to num- | ber our days,*
that we may apply our | hearts to wisdom.

SECOND READING **1 Thessalonians 45:1-11** *back cover*

Stand
ALLELUIA



HOLY GOSPEL **St. Matthew 25:14-30** (*back cover)*

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew **Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the conclusion of the Gospel.

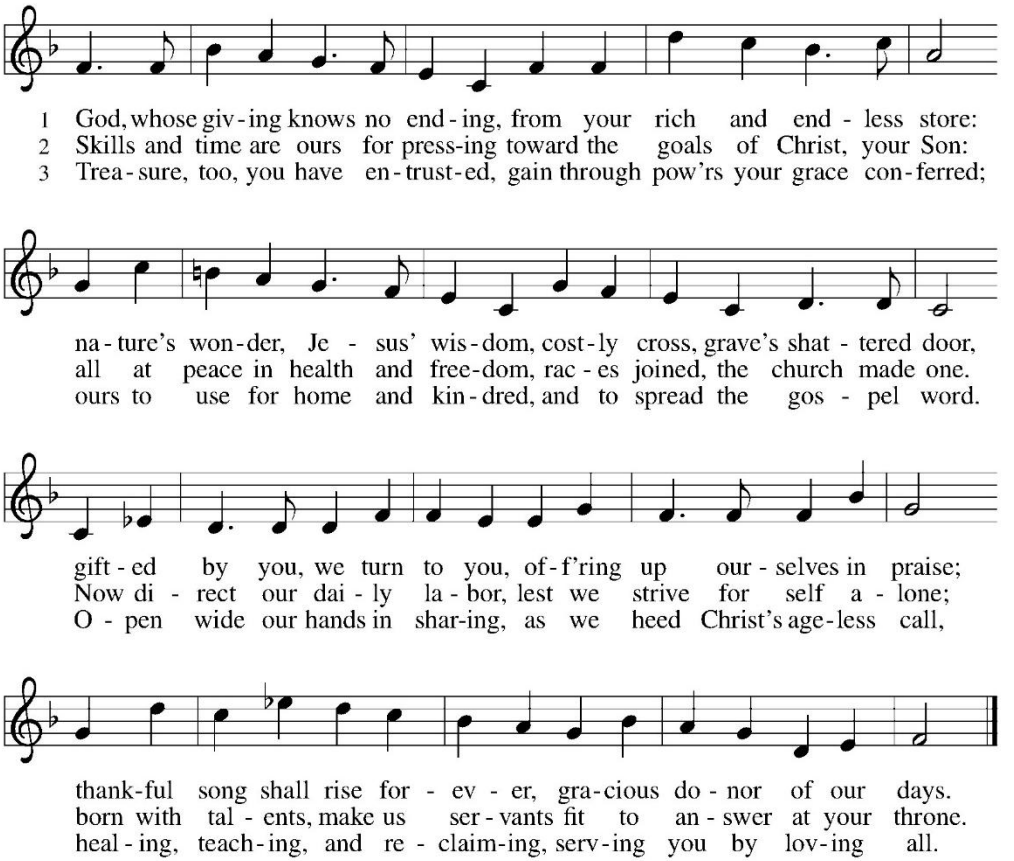
The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sit

SERMON Pastor Stanley Reep

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY ***God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending (ELW 678)***



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.

Let us pray for those who are not ready for the coming of the Lord, for the unbelieving, the skeptical, the scorners, that they may be brought to faith. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray for those who proclaim the good news of Christ, that they may persist in their zeal, empowered and emboldened through the gifts of your Spirit. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray for those who with joy and longing await the return of the Messiah, that they may not grow weary in well-doing. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

Let us pray for those whose lives are marked by hunger and need, grief and loneliness, anger and strife, discord and uncertainty, that each may be assured of the grace and mercy of God. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray for those who suffer affliction of any kind (especially) that you, God, their constant companion and champion, may grant them healing and hope and life. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray for ourselves that the Spirit will prepare us for the return of our Savior and King, that we may enjoy forever the exhilarating life awaiting the faithful in heaven. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Let us pray for the men and women of our armed forces that your heavenly grace will strengthen them in their trials and temptations, that you grant courage to face the perils

that befall them, and that your abiding presence will comfort them wherever they may be. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy

Let us pray for those who have died in the faith and the loved ones who grieve their loss that they would be comforted in the assurance of life eternal with you. Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

We commend to you, merciful God, ourselves and those for whom we pray, through the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. **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.

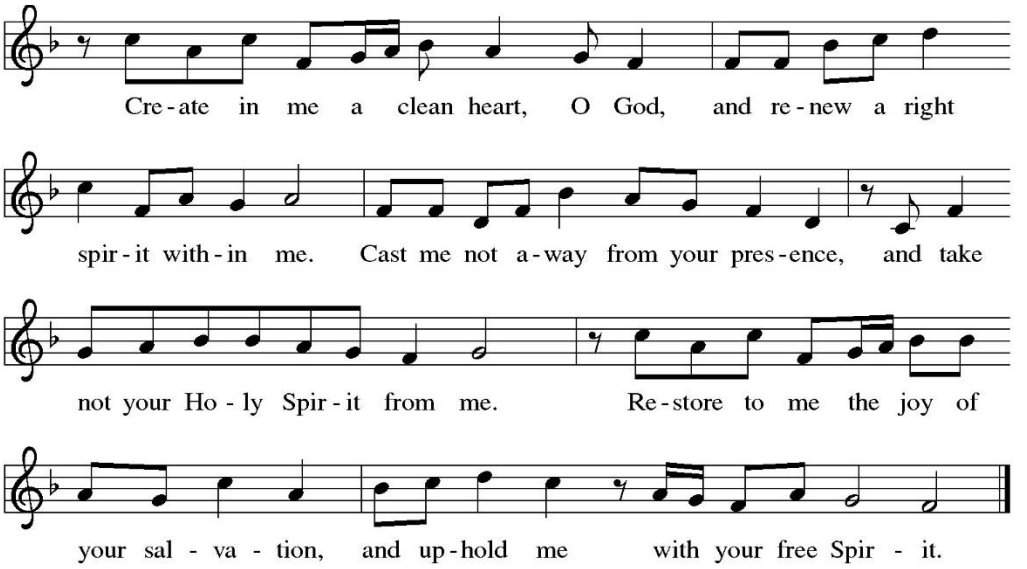
Sit

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS

Handbell Choir *Reflections of Thankfulness* arr,, Sandra Eithun

Stand

OFFERTORY



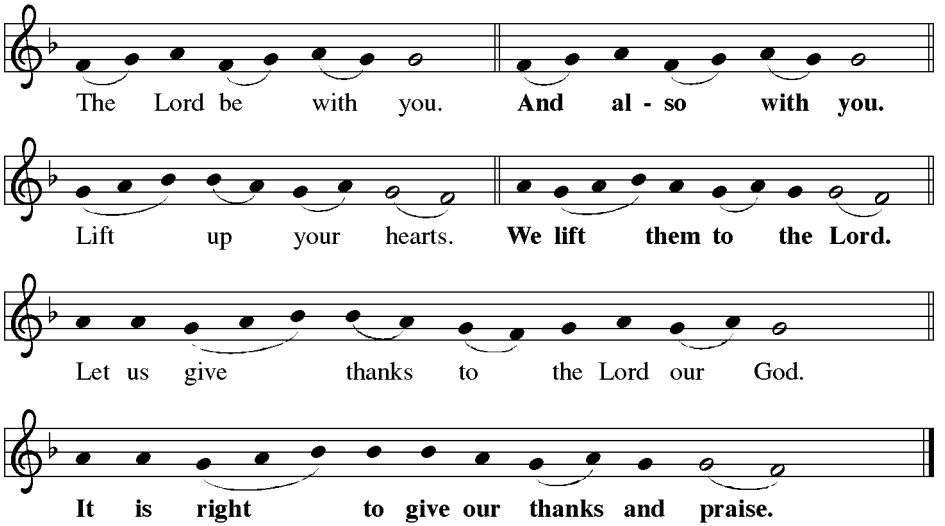
OFFERTORY PRAYER

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

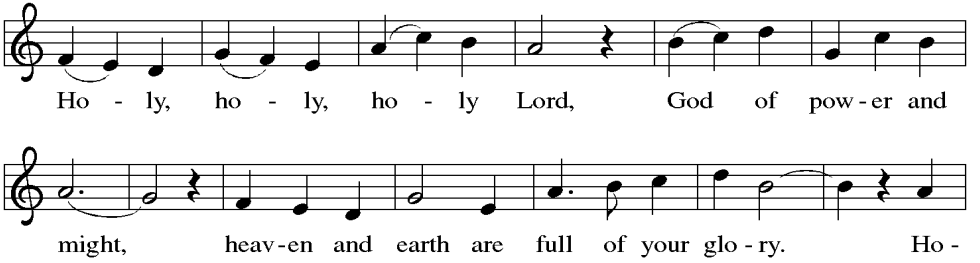
DIALOGUE *Sung by Pastor and* ***congregation***

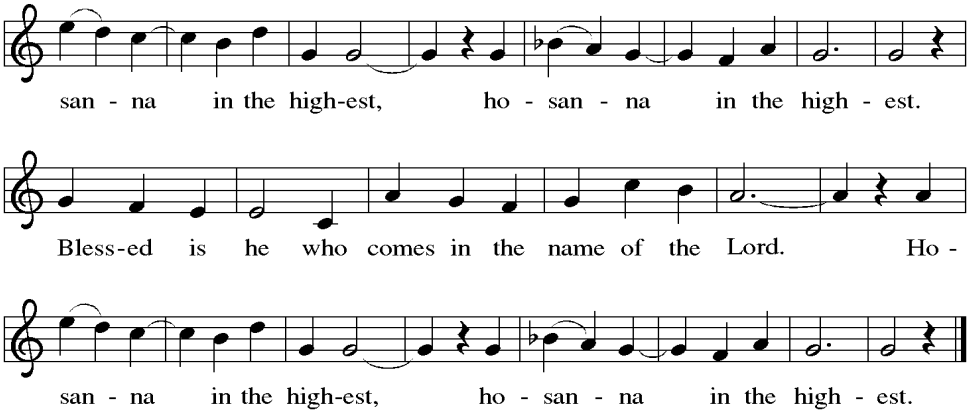


PREFACE *The preface appropriate to the day is said.*

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





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' 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

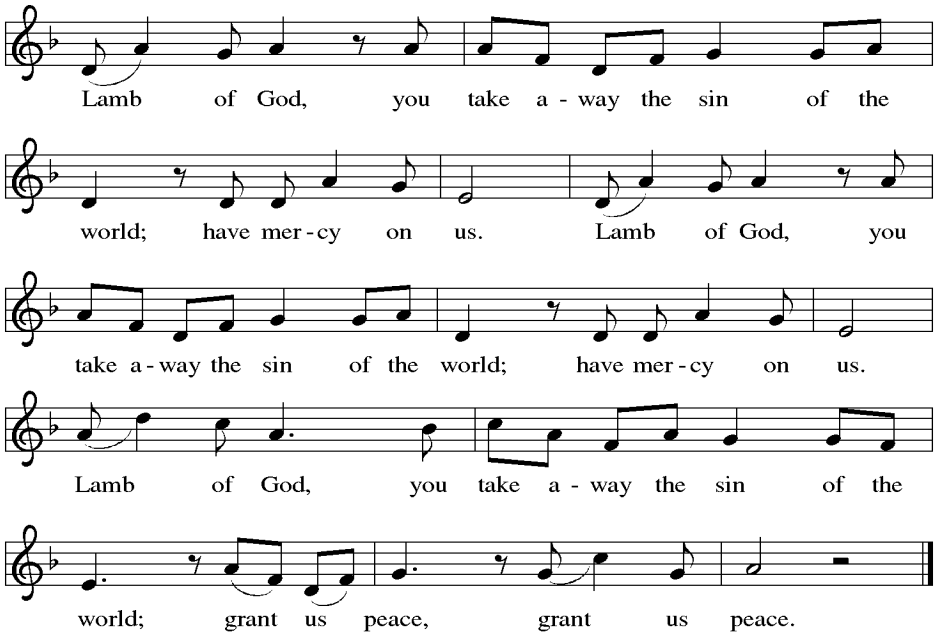
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,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



Sit

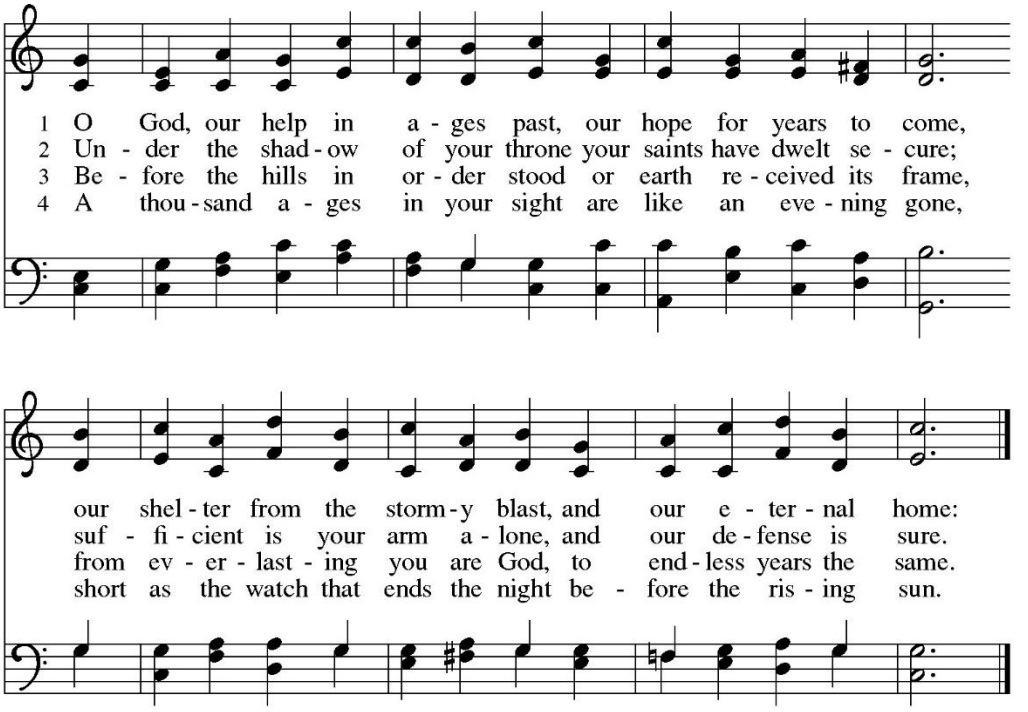
COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL

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 ***O God, Our Help in Ages Past (ELW 632)***



5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all our years away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last
and our eternal home!

Stand

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

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

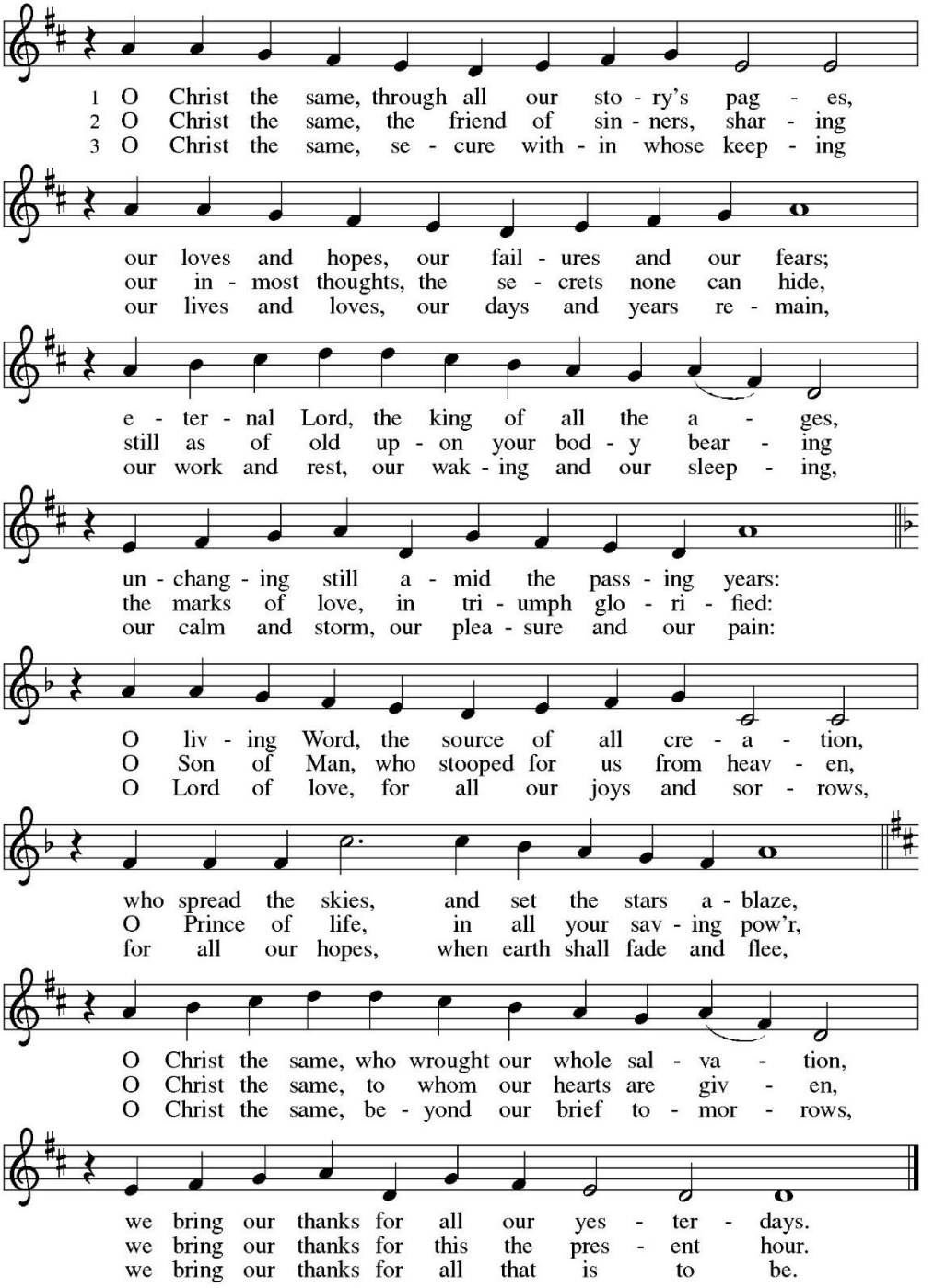
POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

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 ***O Christ the Same (ELW 760)***



DISMISSAL

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

Sit

POSTLUDE *On What has Now Been Sown* Barbara Harbach

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This Week at St. Paul's

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

Sunday, November 15
Newsletter deadline for Dec/Jan issue
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 Annual Meeting & Lunch
6:30 PM AA Meeting-Community Rm

Monday, November 16
6:30 PM Council Mtg -Christ Hall

Tuesday, November 17
8:30 AM Staff Mtg
9:30 AM Food Pantry
6:00 PM CREATE – Preschool-Gr 6
6:00 PM Bible Study - Christ Hall

Wednesday, November 18
10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor – Nave
10:30 AM Bible Study – Christ Hall

Thursday, November 19
10:00 AM Preschool with Pastor – Nave
6:30 PM Handbell Choir
7:30 PM Chancel Choir

Sunday, November 22 Christ the King
9:00 AM Fellowship – Good Shepherd Rm
9:00 AM Chancel choir rehearsal – Music RM
9:30 AM Holy Eucharist – Live Stream
6:30 PM AA Meeting-Community Rm

Serving the Lord with Gladness

DATE	TIME	Asst Min	Crucifer	Comm Asst	Lector	Greeters	Ushers	Altar Guild	Bread Bakers
11/15	9:30 AM	Geoffrey Simon	Larry Moore	Aaron Jacobs	Ed LeCates	Keith & Christine Kates	Team 2L: Kem Vaught, Gail Kerchner, Sandy Dickensheets	Ann Anstadt, Jill Striebig	Jessica Ericson
11/22 Christ the King	9:30 AM	Tom Gibson	Denise Rider	Emily Reep	Laura Livingston	Carl & Laura Livingston	Team 3E: Norma Shue, Cliff Beck, Sheridan Palmer	Ann Anstadt, Jill Striebig	Pat Rudacille

2027 Offering Envelopes are prepared and are available in the Good Shepherd Room. Please take your packet along with you, put them in a secure place so that you have them ready when the new year begins.

Photo Directories have arrived. For those who participated in the process a directory with your name is placed on the table in the Good Shepherd Room. For newcomers to St. Paul's, we have a few additional copies for distribution. Simply contact the Church office to receive a copy.

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18
[not printed]

Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Now concerning the times and the seasons,
brothers and sisters, you do not need to have
anything written to you. [2]For you yourselves
know very well that the day of the Lord will
come like a thief in the night. [3]When they say,
"There is peace and security," then sudden de-
struction will come upon them, as labor pains
come upon a pregnant woman, and there will
be no escape! [4]But you, brothers and sisters,
are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you
like a thief; [5]for you are all children of light and
children of the day; we are not of the night or
of darkness. [6]So, then, let us not fall asleep as
others do, but let us keep awake and be sober,
[7]for those who sleep sleep at night, and those
who are drunk get drunk at night. [8]But since
we belong to the day, let us be sober and put
on the breastplate of faith and love and for a
helmet the hope of salvation. [9]For God has des-
tined us not for wrath but for obtaining salva-
tion through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10]who died
for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep
we may live with him. [11]Therefore encourage
one another and build up each other, as indeed
you are doing.

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30
[Jesus said to the disciples:] "For it is as if a
man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves
and entrusted his property to them; [15]to one
he gave five talents, to another two, to another
one, to each according to his ability. Then he
went away. At once [16]the one who had received
the five talents went off and traded with them
and made five more talents. [17]In the same way,
the one who had the two talents made two
more talents. [18]But the one who had received
the one talent went off and dug a hole in the
ground and hid his master's money. [19]After
a long time the master of those slaves came
and settled accounts with them. [20]Then the
one who had received the five talents came
forward, bringing five more talents, saying,
'Master, you handed over to me five talents;
see, I have made five more talents.' [21]His mas-
ter said to him, 'Well done, good and trustwor-
thy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few
things; I will put you in charge of many things;
enter into the joy of your master.' [22]And the one
with the two talents also came forward, saying,
'Master, you handed over to me two talents;
see, I have made two more talents.' [23]His mas-
ter said to him, 'Well done, good and trustwor-
thy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few
things; I will put you in charge of many things;
enter into the joy of your master.' [24]Then the
one who had received the one talent also came
forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were
a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow
and gathering where you did not scatter, [25]so
I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent
in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'
[26]But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy
slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I
did not sow and gather where I did not scatter?
[27]Then you ought to have invested my money
with the bankers, and on my return I would
have received what was my own with interest.
[28]So take the talent from him, and give it to the
one with the ten talents. [29]For to all those who
have, more will be given, and they will have an
abundance, but from those who have nothing,
even what they have will be taken away. [30]As for
this worthless slave, throw him into the outer
darkness, where there will be weeping and
gnashing of teeth.' "

Next Sunday's Readings: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Psalm 95:1-7a; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46.

Cover: Stained glass of the parable of the talents, St. Mary Abbots, London, England. Photo by jozef sedmak. Copyright © Alamy Stock Photo. Used by permission.

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Tracks 1 and 2
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ITEM015002 ELCA-R

Music and Create is working on the Advent Chancel Drama on Tuesday evenings.

Making Sense of Martin Luther, the adult Sunday school class is held in Christ Hall. Feel free to join the class at any time. We will begin a study on the Gospel of Mark in Advent.

St. Paul's Food Pantry Needs: We are collecting **Cake Mixes, Icing and Brownie mixes** to help our neighbors celebrate the holidays. We serve 60-70 families each week. Help us collect at least 140 desert mixes by mid-December for our distributions on December 15 & 22. 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!

St Paul's collects gently used clothing for **Union Lutheran Church's Clothing Ministry**. Union offers it **free of charge** to needy families in the York City community. If you have large donations you may take them directly to Union Lutheran Church. Simply call them to arrange a time.

Sunday school for Children is held on the Lower Level in rooms 004 and 005. There are opportunities for church members to help with the teaching for a week or two. Simply sign up on the calendar located on the stand in the Good Shepherd room. If you want to know more, please speak with Miss Kelly or Johanna Patterson.

2027 Flower Chart - The 2027 flower chart is posted on the Springettsbury vestibule bulletin board. The cost of the flowers is currently $40 per vase. You are welcome to sign up to provide one or both vases. After you have signed up, simply make a check payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church and mark it altar flowers.

Needed – Lectors, Assisting Ministers, Crucifers, Altar Guild Helpers, Communion Assistants, and Acolytes. Historically, we have identified enough helpers through the annual Time & Ability forms to fully staff our liturgies. Please complete and return your Time & Ability form or contact the church office if you can help with a particular aspect of Worship leadership. Thank you.



Cost is $13.00 per plant.
They will be RED in color.

List plant(s) as shown below (please print clearly)

Number of plants _____ in Honor of:

_____

_____

_____

Number of plants _____ in Loving Memory of:

_____

_____

_____

Number of plants _____ Dedicated to the Glory of God

Your Name:

_____

Plants may be picked up anytime *after* the
10:30 a.m. service on Friday, December 25th.

Total # of Plants _____ @ $13.00 each = $_____

Checks made payable to St. Paul's Lutheran Church

The completed order form with payment attached may be placed in the offering plate or returned to the church office.

Orders due by Sunday, November 22nd

Proper 28 A, 2026
Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 Matthew 25:14-30

"It sounds like the destruction of everything, pastor" said the Bible study participant after she concluded reading the Old Testament lesson from Zephaniah. The whole group seemed a bit puzzled and perplexed by the prophecy. "It doesn't sound like good news" responded another. "Well, maybe that beginning part about the Lord preparing a sacrifice and consecrating the guests. But that gets lost in the powerful imagery of everything coming to an end." And that was how the study this week began.

In the week where we have the prophecy of Zepahniah, it is the week where the Booker Prize 2026 was announced. *The End of Everything* is the title of the book. It was announced this week that British author M. John Harrison has won the Booker Prize 2026 for his 13th novel, *The End of Everything.* This is a prestigious award for folks who live across the pond in the United Kingdom and Ireland. A reviewer writes, "The novel is a dystopian satire that probes the limits of human understanding." Right now, I'm not certain of the depth of human understanding without satire or a dystopian landscape. The panel of judges, however, considered 163 books and were looking for the best work of long-form fiction by writers of any nationality, written in English and published in the UK and or Ireland.

The winning author, M. John Harrison, known mainly for his science fiction writing, at age 81, becomes the oldest author to win the Booker Prize since its inception. The prize is a beautiful trophy and cash, 50,000 pounds or about $67,000! His career spans over 60 years. *The End of Everything* is a destabilizing and satirical dystopian novel that follows a beachcomber and his pistol-toting aunt as they eke out an existence together set on a near future English coast near Kent. The coast of Kent is usually known as the "Garden of England" meeting the sea, and features the dramatic white chalk cliffs, sandy beaches and historic seaside towns, we often associate with the white cliffs of Dover. The award-winning novel depicts a different reality.

The *End of Everything* could be the warning of the prophet Zephaniah to God's people in the southern kingdom, Judah. He is proclaiming a different reality from the comfort and security that God's people have known and from which they have drifted as they have chased after other gods. He boldly proclaims that without God they have no future. They may build houses, but they will not live in them. They may plant vineyards, but they will not drink wine from them. And contrary to what they believe, that it doesn't matter what you believe, belief and practice matter!

Zephania wrote about 600 years before the birth of Christ. This was not long after King Manasseh had ended his 50-year reign in Judah. With such a long reign he had plenty of time to establish patterns and procedures, protocols and corporate life. And King Manasseh did just that. Unfortunately, King Manasseh was one of the worst kings on record. As king, Manasseh made idol worship and child sacrifice common practice. He built altars for those who used the aligning

of the stars to predict the future. He encouraged abominable acts as part of religious rituals. When Manasseh concluded his long reign, his son, Amon, took over leadership and was supportive of the ways of his father. More of the treacherous flaunting of immorality.

Zephaniah announces a different word, God's word, a word of judgment for the sins of the nation. The day of the Lord would be a supernatural event sweeping the whole planet clean. Zephaniah offered little hope that such judgment could be avoided. He pleaded with people to change their ways to return to the way of the Lord, to make their paths straight and to live life according to the statutes and ordinances of the Lord God. Judgment is coming he warned.

There was however hope for a minority, a faithful few, who would be sheltered from the disaster if they would seek God. In a book of the Bible that contains only 3 short chapters, Zephaniah concludes that it wouldn't be the end of everything. There would in fact be a purified remnant that would learn again to worship God. This sets the stage for the next king, the young boy Josiah. At age 8, when Josiah ascended the throne following his father's assassination, he led God's people in reform and reestablished worship, festivals, and the first Passover celebration in generations. A purified remnant of God's people marked by truthfulness and humility would put their trust in God. And the world would be remade through the appropriate worship of God.

Appropriate worship is more than what takes place in the temple on the Lord's Day. Or in our tradition on Sunday morning. Appropriate worship has to do with daily life, living in love of God and extending blessing to one's neighbor. This is the sort of thing that gets Jesus off on the wrong foot with the religious leaders of his day. Nearly 600 years after the prophet Zephaniah and King Josiah, Jesus of Nazareth teaches in the synagogues, and the religious leaders think that he is bringing the end of everything.

Jesus using parables teaches his followers about judgement and readiness. He uses stories to communicate the importance of faithful following, servanthood, and kingdom life. And just about the time that his followers think that they have come to the end of everything, Jesus surprises them with yet another dimension to life with him, in him, through him. When Jesus is put to death on a cross outside of Jerusalem it appeared to his followers that this was indeed the end of everything. But even then, God was making a way forward for his people. On Easter morning God the Father raises Jesus his only Son, from death to life. That great act of power and love opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Such joy will be proclaimed by the Apostle Paul as he calls on the beloved of God to encourage one another in their steadfast proclamation of God's power and might to save and redeem all people.

Which brings me to us, gathered here this morning. As we hear the dreadful doom proclaimed by the prophet Zephaniah, and the rumblings of fear being circulated in Thessalonica and the parable of the talents and those who are welcomed into the joy of the master and the one who in fear dug a hole and buried it, we are called to live life in right relationship with God not out of fear but in trust that God's promise to us is certain and true. That promise was made to us

in Holy Baptism. We have been marked with the cross of Christ forever. His promise is everlasting and therefore hopeful. St. Paul writes that we are to encourage one another with these words. But we are also accountable for our response to Christ Jesus. Such is the call of the prophet, the apostle, and the evangelist to all who will listen.

As God's consecrated, beloved servants we heed the word of judgement, not out of fear, but out of trust knowing that God alone delivers salvation. This morning he comes to us, forgiving us of our doubts and fears and placing in our hands his life-giving endless life in the bread of Holy Communion. We stretch out our hands and receive the one who stretched out his arms on the cross making a way for all people. This is but the beginning of everything. We are called to live heeding the voices of Zephaniah, Paul, Matthew, and of our Lord Jesus who wants us to be ready and who welcomes us as guest into the joy of the master.

This year, the Booker Prize was given to the author, M. John Harrison, for the story *The End of Everything.* In Christ we are selected, given all that is needed for the beginning of everything, life lived following Christ and encouraged by a community that proclaims that with him it is the beginning of everything. *"Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master*." That word is greater than any trophy, prize, cash gift, or public recognition. Amen.