



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Pentecost 4
June 21, 2026

Introduction

God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. Marked with the cross and filled with holy food, we are sent from worship to witness to Christ in the world.

Overview

God Comes First

God is, the theologians say, transcendent—beyond us, always exceeding our easy grasp. Recognizing God's awesome transcendence brings a reevaluation of other values. The God of vertigo-inspiring infinitude is also the God who know the hairs of our head. Trusting this God, fear is defanged and faith becomes a sort of courage. We live in faithful relationship to the hair-counting God as we joyfully "acknowledge" the one who acknowledges us. And as we do so, reveling in the intimacy of God's loving regard for us, other relationships, even familial ones, take on a different cast. God comes first, we realize, not only in priority, but ontologically, "in the beginning" (John 1:1). Before the God who is at once gracious and transcendent, we "lose" our lives and discover the true life in following the way of Jesus the crucified Son.

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

"I'll Praise You Anywhere"

Praise Team

The Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

ELW p. 94

P In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
Most merciful God,

C we confess that we are captive 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.

P 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.

C Amen.

*GATHERING HYMN "Ten Thousand Reasons" (See Insert)

*GREETING

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

C And also with you.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Teach us, good Lord God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The Word

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

First Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jeremiah accuses God of forcing him into a ministry that brings him only contempt and persecution. Yet Jeremiah is confident that God will be a strong protector against his enemies and commits his life into God's hands.

7 O Lord, you have enticed me,

and I was enticed;

you have overpowered me,

and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;

everyone mocks me.

8 For whenever I speak, I must cry out;

I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the Lord has become for me

a reproach and derision all day long.

9 If I say, "I will not mention him
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.

10 For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.

"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him
and take our revenge on him."

11 But the Lord is with me like a terrifying warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.

They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

12 O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous;
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

13 Sing to the Lord;
praise the Lord!

For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 69:7-10 [11-15] 16-18 (read responsively)

Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind. (Ps. 69:16)

7 Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach,
and shame has covered my face.

**8 I have become a stranger to my own kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.**

9 Zeal for your house has eaten me up;
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

**10 I humbled myself with fasting,
but that was turned to my reproach.**

[11 I put on sackcloth also,
and became a byword among them.

**12 Those who sit at the gate murmur against me,
and the drunkards make songs about me.**

13 But as for me, this is my prayer to you, at the time you have set, O Lord: "In your great mercy, O God, answer me with your unfailing help.

**14 Save me from the mire; do not let me sink;
let me be rescued from those who hate me and out of the deep waters.**

15 Let not the torrent of waters wash over me, neither let the deep swallow me up; do not let the pit shut its mouth upon me.]

**16 Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me.**

17 Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.

**18 Draw near to me and redeem me;
because of my enemies deliver me**

Second Reading: Romans 6:1b-11

In baptism we were incorporated into the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. We have been made new in Christ through his death and resurrection to live freed from sin.

1b Should we continue in sin in order that grace may increase? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, so we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Halle, Halle, Hallelujah (2 times) ELW p. 172



***GOSPEL Matthew 10: 24-39**

Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition. However, he assures them that they need not fear for the truth will come to light. Life is found in Christ.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew

C **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the twelve:] 24 "A disciple is not above the teacher nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

26 "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of

them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

32 “Everyone, therefore, who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven, 33 but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

34 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.

35 For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,

36 and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

37 “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Pastor Alex

SERMON

Pastor Alex

*HYMN OF THE DAY “How Firm a Foundation”

ELW #796

*APOSTLES CREED

ELW p.105

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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

A Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray for the church and the needs of the world.

A brief silence.

Life-giving God, you have called your people to lose their lives for Jesus' sake. Strengthen your church to follow you in the face of difficulty.
God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Creator God, you know every sparrow that falls to the ground. Protect migrating birds, endangered species, and their natural habitats.
Empower us to care for your creation. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Sovereign God, you call us to act justly and love mercy. Protect those with marginalized identities to whom we have not shown the abounding love of Jesus. Bring an end to oppression and bigotry in all forms. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Sustaining God, you promise to provide for us. Help those living with disability. Comfort those experiencing any sort of illness or suffering especially *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachel Benkovic, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, Rob Lipsitt, and Sally Schonewolf.* God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Empowering God, strengthen us to live out our diverse callings. We pray especially for fathers and father figures, that they show your compassion and care. We pray for all for whom this day is difficult or painful. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Faithful God, we give thanks for saints (like Onesimos Nesib) who have claimed their baptismal promises. May we follow their example of faith and service. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

P Trusting you receive all our prayers, we commend our spoken and unspoken prayers to you, O God, through Jesus our Savior.

C Amen.

*PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Losing"

Praise Team

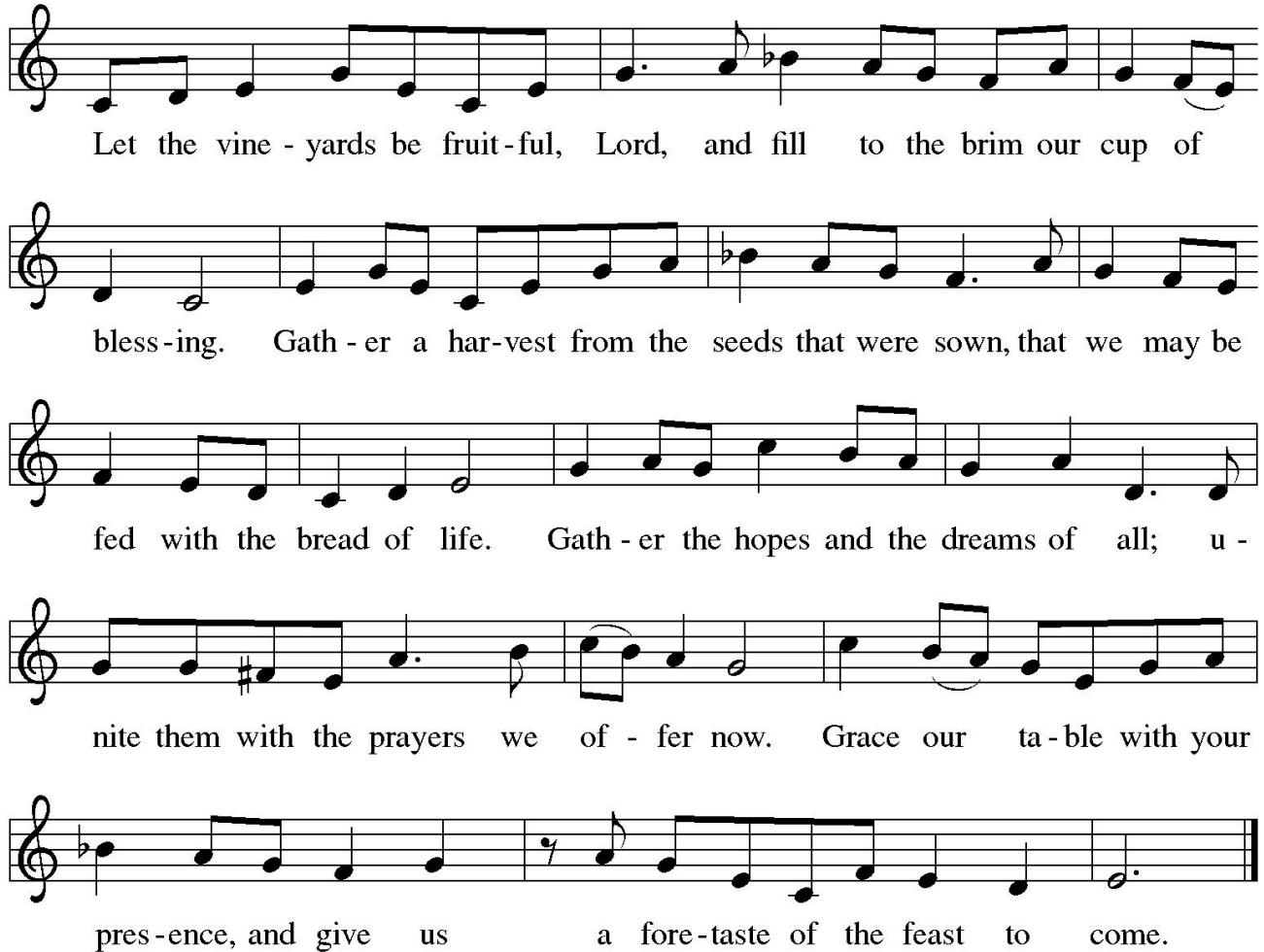
The Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

*OFFERTORY HYMN

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

ELW #182



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 now. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

A Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever.

C Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW p.206

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ELW p.207



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.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



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

*EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P 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.*

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

Amen.

*THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p.208

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

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

forever and ever. Amen.

*SHARING THE MEAL

P Heaven has come near. Come, share in the feast.

COMMUNION HYMNS:

"Lamb of God"

ELW p.146

"Let The Whole Creation Cry"

ELW #876

"Faith of Our Fathers"

ELW #812

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever.

C Amen.

The Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

*BLESSING

P Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ✠ one God,
bless, heal, and hold you today and always.

C Amen.

*SENDING HYMN

"This Little Light of Mine"

ELW #677

*DISMISSAL

A Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news !

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Juliet Mitton

We appreciate Juliet Mitton for sharing her musical talent with us this morning. Thank-you.

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Prelude - "I'll Praise You Anywhere" - words & music - Ben Fielding, Brandon Lake, Hank Bentley & Jacob Sooter @2023 Capitol CMG Paragon CCLI Songs #7219772 Praise Team

Gathering Hymn - "Ten Thousand Reasons" (see insert) words & music Matt Redman & Jonas Myrin @ 2011 Thankyou Music CCLI Songs #6016351

Gospel Acclamation - "Halle, Halle, Hallelujah" ELW #172 PUBLIC DOMAIN

Hymn of the Day - "How Firm a Foundation" ELW #796 text - J. Rippon music - Early American PUBLIC DOMAIN

Special Music - "Losing" - words & music -Jeff Owen, Mike Donehey & Ruben Juarez @2012 Formerly Music CCLI Songs #6328915 Praise Team

Offertory Hymn - "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful " ELW #182 @1978 Augsburg Fortress words - John W. Arthur music - Richard Hillert

"Holy, Holy, Holy" p.206, setting 10 ELW

Distribution of Communion - Lamb of God, p. 208 ELW

"Let the Whole Creation Cry" ELW #876 words - Stopford Brooke music - Jakob Heintze arr. J. S. Bach PUBLIC DOMAIN

"Faith of Our Fathers" ELW #812 words - Frederick Faber music - Henri F. Hemy PUBLIC DOMAIN

Sending hymn - "This Little Light of Mine" ELW #677 text & music - African American Spiritual arr. Horace Clarence Boyer PUBLIC DOMAIN

St. Peter's Lutheran Church Highspire Contact Information:

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If you are in need of Pastoral care, please reach out to our church office at 717-939-3492 or by email at stpetershighspire240@gmail.com . You can also reach out to Pastor Alex, at 717-434-5037.

Worship Participants for June 21, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Brian Keyser
Musician	Juliet Mitton
Lector	Helene Hoch

Worship Participants for June 28, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Patrick Hawkins
Musician	Juliet Mitton
Lector	Mary Hunt

ALTAR VASES: Presented to the Glory of God by Nancy Wilson in memory of Sarah (Sally) Wilson, whose birthday anniversary is June 9th, and in honor of Kevin and Janine (Wilson) Smith's wedding anniversary June 8th.

CENTERPIECE: Presented to the Glory of God in honor of the Installation of our Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt by her St. Peter's Congregation.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT: In honor of Elijah Dean who will be graduating from Wilson High School on June 5, 2026. During his senior year, he earned several football honors including All-Berks Honorable Mention, Lancaster-Lebanon League Section 1 All-Star 2nd Team Offense, and recognition on the Berks County Football Coaches Association All-Academic Team. Elijah has committed to Lebanon Valley College to continue both his athletic and academic career, where he will play football and major in exercise science. This past school year, he served as an intern with the athletic training department and has also worked at Instashine Car Wash for the past three years. Elijah's goal is to become a physical therapist. Elijah is the son of Monica and Gerome Ruff, and Dominic Allen, grandson of Tracy and Tim Keane, and the Great-Grandson of Bob and Kay Sutch.

Favorite Hymns Request

This summer we will be incorporating your favorite hymns during worship. Please list your hymn requests on the section below and place this sheet in the offering plate or in the church office. Thank you!

All are Welcome Bible Study

The All are Welcome Bible Study meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm. We are currently reading Psalms. We send out a weekly email with the Zoom link, as well as a brief summary of what we covered the previous week. To get the link for attending the Zoom session, or just to get on the weekly email list, please contact Matt and Mary Hunt at allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com .

A Friendly reminder from Sally:

Please remember to take 1 or more Samaritan Bags to hand out to those who may be in need of this outreach .They are located in a basket in the back of the sanctuary to grab and keep available in your travels.

Today, Sunday, June 21st: Installation for Pastor Alex will be held at 2pm at St. Michael Lutheran Church, Harrisburg. All are invited! There will be light refreshments to celebrate afterwards.

Come to church and stay for Fellowship every Sunday in the Parlor. Enjoy coffee and snacks and friendly conversation! If you would be interested in "Hosting a Sunday" please check the sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board located in the hallway outside the Music Room/Church Office.