



ST PAUL PINE GROVE MILLS

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
AUGUST 23, 2026

WELCOME TO SAINT PAUL!

We are happy to have you here!

HOW TO KNOW WHEN TO STAND, SIT, OR SPEAK

Whenever you see an asterisk (*) at a heading, you are invited to stand as you are able. You are not required to stand, so if, for health or emotional reasons you cannot or do not wish to stand, that is okay. You are invited to speak the words printed in **bold type**.

HOW TO SING HYMNS IN HARMONY

To save space in printing the bulletin, we usually limit what is printed to the melody. If you'd like to sing in harmony, the hymn numbers are listed in our bulletin so you can open the red books in the pews (called ELWs).

WE ARE AN OPEN COMMUNION CONGREGATION

This means that any Christian who has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is invited to receive Holy Communion.

HOW TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT US



Offerings can be made online at stpaulpgm.org/give, mailed to St. Paul Lutheran Church, PO Box 200, Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868, placed in the mail slot (outside door to Pastor Paul's office), or in the offering plate located in the lobby/narthex near the entrance of the sanctuary.

A NOTE ON COMMUNION WAFERS



To topple barriers that prevent participation in worship, we want to make it possible for individuals with Celiac Disease or gluten intolerance to be able to eat the Body of our Lord. Our default wafers are made by Parish Crossroads and are known as "Low Gluten Wafers" because they contain trace amounts of gluten. However, the wafers are tested at least once a year for how much gluten is in them. Since 2020, the wafers have routinely tested to contain 15ppm gluten or less (The US FDA defines most food products with 20ppm or less as "gluten free"). Use the QR Code and look for the link that gives the most recent test results. If you still have concerns, we have some truly gluten-free wafers available upon request.

GATHERING

The Gathering for worship began when you started readying yourself for worship

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

Isaiah tells the people to remember the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus tells Peter that on the rock of his confession, the church will be built—not on certainty, but on faith spoken out loud. God's mercy and word of reconciliation are the church's true foundation and its whole mission. Paul urges you not to be shaped by the world around you, but to offer your body, your gifts, your ordinary life as a living sacrifice. From this table, you are sent to live out that worship in word and deed, wherever you go this week.

PRELUDE — *Out of consideration for our musicians, please refrain from talking during the prelude.*

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ✠Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

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

P Compassionate God, **A: we confess to you all our sins. Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ's name we pray, 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. **A: Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN** *"The Church's One Foundation" (ELW 654)*



1 The church's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ, her Lord;
 2 E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, yet one o'er all the earth,
 3 Though with a scorn - ful won - der this world sees her op - pressed,
 4 Through toil and trib - u - la - tion and tu - mult of her war,
 5 Yet she on earth has u - nion with God, the Three in One,



she is his new cre - a - tion by wa - ter and the word.
 her char - ter of sal - va - tion one Lord, one faith, one birth:
 by schisms . . rent a - sund - er, by her - e - sies dis - tressed,
 she waits the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for - ev - er - more;
 and mys - tic sweet com - mu - nion with those whose rest is won.



From heav'n he came and sought her to be his ho - ly bride;
 one ho - ly name she bless - es, par - takes one ho - ly food,
 yet saints their watch are keep - ing; their cry goes up: "How long?"
 till with the vi - sion glo - rious her long - ing eyes are blest,
 Oh, bless - ed heav'n-ly cho - rus! Lord, save us by your grace,



with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.
 and to one hope she press - es with ev - 'ry grace en - dued.
 and soon the night of weep - ing shall be the morn of song.
 and the great church vic - to - rious shall be the church at rest.
 that we, like saints be - fore us, may see you face to face.

Text: Samuel J. Stone, 1839–1900
 Music: AURELIA, Samuel S. Wesley, 1810–1876

***GREETING**

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

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. A: Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 51:1-6

This reading comes from the time when the exiles were about to return from Babylon to Jerusalem. Giving up the life they had known for 70 years, they were going to trek through unfriendly territory, and return to a city still in ruins. They were wondering if the God who had given them up to generations of exile would protect them on the road and in their almost forgotten homeland.

¹ Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. ² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah, who bore you, for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. ³ For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ⁴ Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation, for a teaching will go out from me and my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵ I will bring near my deliverance swiftly; my salvation has gone out, and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. ⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look at the earth beneath, for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats, but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended. L: The word of the Lord. **A: Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 138

sung to Candler (ACS 1028)

Like the first reading, this psalm proclaims and revels in the dependability of God's promises and love.

¹ I'll praise You, Lord, with all my heart; before the "gods" I'll praise impart.

² I'll bow down toward Your holy place, and praise Your name for truth and grace. You have exalted o'er all things, Your name and word, which true life bring.

³ The day I called, You answered me; You made me bold and strong to be.

⁴ May all the kings of earth praise You, Lord, when they hear Your words so true.

⁵ May they sing of the ways of God; the Lord's great glory known abroad.

⁶For though the Lord on high is great, yet He regards our lowly state,
And looks on those who humble are, but proud ones He knows from afar.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of strife, e'en there You do preserve my life.
You stretch Your hand against my foes; Your right hand saves; You them oppose.

⁸The Lord's own purposes for me, He will accomplish and fulfill.
Your love, O Lord, forever stands; do not forsake works of Your hands.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 12:1-8

Until mid-September, we'll be reading most of the book of Romans straight through. Paul has spent several chapters affirming that our relationship with God is dependent not on our worthiness but on God's free grace. Now he focuses on the new life which that relationship draws us into, a life transformed into stewardship and community.

[Paul writes:] ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

L: The word of the Lord. **A: Thanks be to God.**

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. *Repeat alleluia*

You are | the Messiah,* the Son of the | living God.

***GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 16:13-20**

The phrase "Son of Man" is used in the Old Testament, most often by Ezekiel, to refer to a figure whose appearance marks the end of time. In the Gospels, Jesus often uses it to refer to himself. It's remarkable that all the figures "people" identify as the Son of Man have died. This passage marks the beginning of the "messianic secret," as Jesus commands his disciples not to reveal his identity until after the Resurrection.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 16th chapter. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

P: The gospel of the Lord. **A: Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY:** *"Built on a Rock" (ELW 652)*



1 Built on a rock the church shall stand, e - ven when stee - ples are
 2 Sure - ly, in tem - ples made with hands God the Most High is not
 3 Christ builds a house of liv - ing stones: we are his own hab - i -
 4 Yet in this house, an earth - ly frame, Je - sus the chil - dren is
 5 Through all the pass - ing years, O Lord, grant that, when church bells are



fall - ing; crum - bled have spires in ev - 'ry land, bells still are
 dwell - ing— high in the heav'ns his tem - ple stands, all earth - ly
 ta - tion; he fills our hearts, his hum - ble thrones, grant - ing us
 bless - ing; hith - er we come to praise his name, faith in our
 ring - ing, man - y may come to hear your Word, who here this



chim - ing and call - ing— call - ing the young and old to rest, call - ing the
 tem - ples ex - cel - ling. Yet God who dwells in heav'n a - bove deigns to a -
 life and sal - va - tion. Where two or three will seek his face, he in their
 Sav - ior con - fess - ing. Je - sus to us his Spir - it sent, mak - ing with
 prom - ise is bring - ing: "I know my own, my own know me; you, not the



souls of those dis - tressed, long - ing for life ev - er - last - ing.
 bide with us in love, mak - ing our bod - ies his tem - ple.
 midst will show his grace, bless - ings up - on them be - stow - ing.
 us his cov - e - nant, grant - ing his chil - dren the king - dom.
 world, my face shall see; my peace I leave with you. A - men."

Text: Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783–1872; tr. Carl Doving, 1867–1937, adapt.

Music: KIRKEN DEN ER ET GAMMEL HUS, Ludvig M. Lindeman, 1812–1887

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***INVITATION TO BAPTISM**

***CREED**

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**

With bold trust in God's unfailing provision, we pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

A brief silence.

God, our rock, you are the foundation on which the church is built. Strengthen and encourage your faithful people everywhere they gather, that they boldly proclaim your word of life to all the world. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

You spoke and all creation came into being. Field and forest, wetland and wilderness—all reveal your glory. Sustain and nourish your creation. Teach us to be wise stewards of all you have made. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

You bring deliverance to nations and peoples. Come to the aid of nations experiencing war, conflict, disease, famine, and disaster (*especially*). Guide the work of relief agencies and peacemaking organizations. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

You regard the lowly and hear us when we cry out to you. Be present among all who struggle with addiction, housing insecurity, incarceration, and mental illness, that they know they are not alone. Hear our prayers for all in need this day (*especially*). Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

You draw together people with differing gifts. Lift up the many and varied gifts and talents of this congregation and strengthen the bonds of fellowship that all may be united as the body of Christ. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your steadfast love endures forever. We give thanks for the faithful who died in the hope of this promise (*especially*). Strengthen us in faith until the day we join them at your eternal banquet. Merciful God, **A: receive our prayer.**

Receive our prayers and answer, O God, as you have promised. All this we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **A: Amen.**

*PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **A: And also with you.**

MEAL

OFFERING

MUSICAL OFFERING

*OFFERTORY



1 Oh, what shall I ren - der in thanks to my Lord
 2 My hands take the cup of sal - va - tion you give;
 for all the good gifts by which I am re - stored?
 I'll praise you, O God, for as long as I live.
 No trea - sure I ten - der could ev - er re - pay
 My thanks will rise up as I call on your name,
 God's mer - cy and faith - ful - ness, new ev - 'ry day.
 with all of your peo - ple your good - ness pro - claim.

Text: Martin A. Seltz, based on Ps. 116

Text © 1998 Augsburg Fortress

*OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray: 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.

. **A: Amen.**

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

* DIALOGUE

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.

The image shows four staves of musical notation in G-clef and F-sharp key signature. Each staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath. The first staff has two measures, the second and third have two measures each, and the fourth has one measure. The lyrics are: '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.', and 'It is right to give our thanks and praise.'

*PREFACE

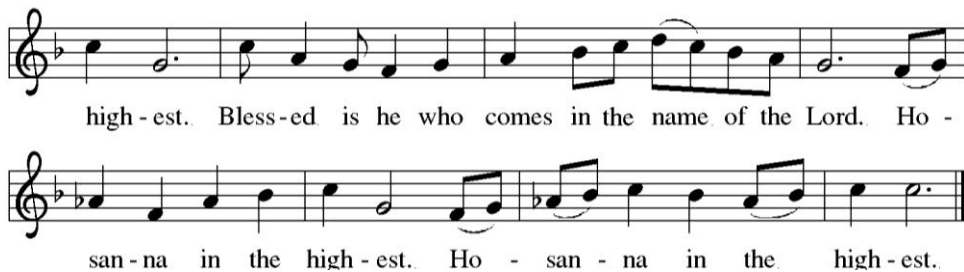
P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. 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:

*SANCTUS

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,

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

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G-clef and F-sharp key signature. The first staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might,'. The second staff contains a melody line with lyrics underneath: 'heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the'.



***THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

P: Holy God, our Maker, Redeemer, and Healer, in the world of your creation,
you wove all things together in life and praise.

When sin had broke what you had made, you sent your Son to heal our wounds
and gather us again into one.

In the night in which he was handed over,
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.

We proclaim the mystery of our faith:

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

Remembering, therefore, his acts of healing,

his body given up, and his victory over death,
we await that day when all the peoples of the earth
will come to the river to enjoy the tree of life.

A: Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.

Send your Spirit upon us and this meal:

as grains scattered on the hillside become one bread,
so let your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth,
that all may be fed with the Bread of life, your Son.

A: Amen! Come, Holy Spirit!

Through him all glory and honor is yours,

Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,

in your holy Church, both now and forever. **A: Amen**

*LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

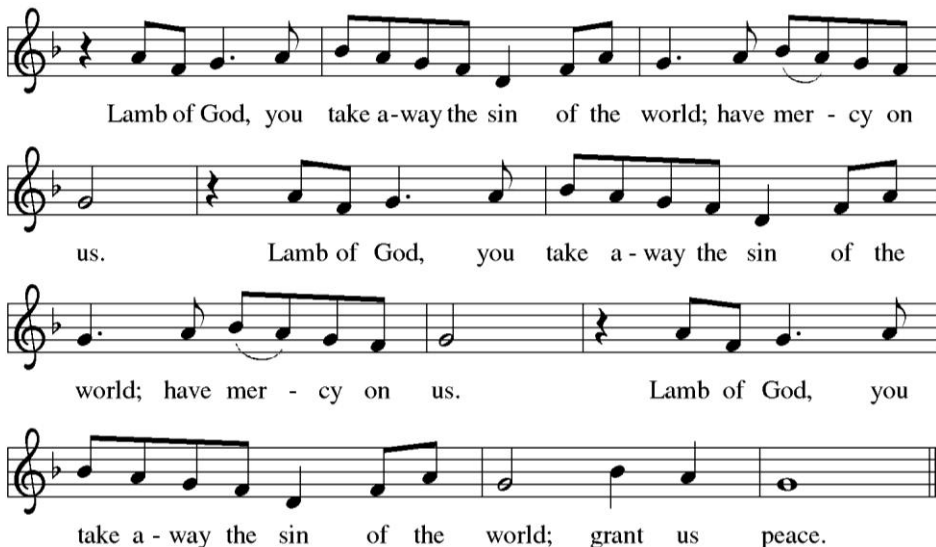
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

**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.
Lead us not into time of trial,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
forever and ever. Amen.**

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

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

*LAMB OF GOD



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.

COMMUNION

P: The body of Christ, given for you. L: The blood of Christ, shed for you. **A: Amen.**

COMMUNION HYMN: "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (ELW 623)



1 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my-self in thee;
2 Not the la - bors of my hands can ful - fill thy law's de - mands;
3 Noth - ing in my hand I bring; sim - ply to thy cross I cling.
4 While I draw this fleet - ing breath, when mine eye - lids close in death,



let the wa - ter and the blood, from thy riv - en side which flowed,
could my zeal no res - pite know, could my tears for - ev - er flow,
Na - ked, come to thee for dress; help-less, look to thee for grace;
when I soar to worlds un - known, see thee on thy judg - ment throne,



be of sin the dou - ble cure; cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.
all for sin could not a - tone; thou must save, and thou a - lone.
foul, I to the foun - tain fly; wash me, Sav - ior, or I die.
Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my-self in thee.

Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740–1778

Music: TOPLADY, Thomas Hastings, 1784–1872

*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you, body, mind, and soul, now, and unto eternal life. **A: Amen.**

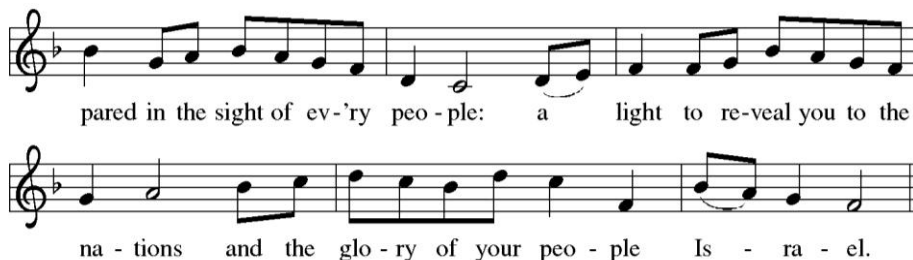
*POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE – *Nunc Dimittis* (Now, Lord)



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 -



*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

L: Let us pray. 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. **A: Amen.**

SENDING

*SENDING OF COMMUNION

P: Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care: As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, assist those who set forth to share your word and sacrament with those who are *sick, homebound, and imprisoned*. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your abiding presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **A: Amen.**

BLESSING OF BACKPACKS AND BRIEFCASES

An Affirmation of Christian Vocation

All who are beginning a new school year, all who labor in paid work, and all who serve as volunteers come forward, bringing backpacks, briefcases, lunch boxes, tool belts, name badges, keys, or other signs of daily work. Items may be placed on or near the font.

P: Sisters and brothers in Christ, both your work and your rest are in God. What you carry in your hands each day — books and laptops, wrenches and clipboards, casserole dishes and committee agendas — you carry as one baptized into Christ.

P: *To students and teachers*

You who set out each morning with backpacks and lesson plans: will you learn and teach with curiosity and honesty, and will you treat every person in your school as one whom God loves?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: *To those who work for pay, at home or away from home*

You who carry briefcases and toolboxes, badges and uniforms, phones that ring at all hours: will you do your work with integrity, deal justly with those you serve and those you serve alongside, and honor the rest God has given you?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: *To those who serve without wages*

You whose labor appears on no payroll and in no personnel file — you who drive neighbors to appointments, deliver meals, tutor children, tend gardens and grandchildren, sit on boards, sew quilts, stock the food pantry, visit the homebound, and keep this congregation and this community running: will you offer your time and your hard-won wisdom as a gift, and receive the gratitude of others as a gift in return?

R: I will, and I ask God to help me.

P: *To you all*

Will you all endeavor to pattern your life on the Lord Jesus Christ, in gratitude to God and in service to others, at morning and evening, at work and at play, all the days of your life?

A: I will, and I ask God to help me.

The presiding minister extends hands over the assembly and the gathered items.

P: Almighty God, by the power of the Spirit you have knit these your servants into the one body of your Son, Jesus Christ. Bless these backpacks and briefcases, these tools and tablets and name tags, and bless the hands that carry them. Look with favor upon your servants in their commitment to serve in Christ's name. Give the young courage to learn and to befriend. Give those who labor for wages patience, fairness, and true rest. Give those who labor freely the assurance that their work is neither small nor unseen. Strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.

As each person receives a tag or token for backpack or bag, the minister may say:

P: God bless your going out and your coming in, this day and always.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

You may be seated.

***CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE**

***BLESSING**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, ✚ and the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

***SENDING HYMN:** *"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"* (ELW 596)



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



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

Refrain



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



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

Text: Edward Mote, 1797–1874, alt.

Music: THE SOLID ROCK, William B. Bradbury, 1816–1868

***DISMISSAL**

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

A: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

REFLECTIONS FOR AFTER WORSHIP

Confessing Christ, Formed in Faith

In late August, students are preparing to go back to school, and many churches gear up for a new year of Christian education. It is a good time to be reminded of the heart of Christian formation: conformation and transformation (Rom. 12:2).

Disciples are formed over time—shaped by learning, worship, and all aspects of Christian life in community. As it was for Peter, part of our formation is learning to confess Jesus as the Messiah, not only with the right words but also through an experience of the living God in Christ. And along with Peter, through such formation we also discover who we are in relation to God: After Peter “confesses” Jesus’ identity of Messiah, Jesus “confesses” Peter’s identity by calling out his name and vocation.

Traditionally, Lutheran worship contains two confessions which keep forming us: a confession of sin and a confession of faith. In the first, we acknowledge who we are as sinner and saint, and in the second, we acknowledge who God is in the mystery of the Trinity. Like Peter’s, our own identity is revealed in those truths. And, we might say, we are continually formed by and through them.

Peter’s confession is not a precondition for following Jesus; it comes in the middle of his journey of discipleship. Our formation too is a long process—lifelong, in fact—which begins at baptism (and even before!) and is guided by those who travel before and with us. At this time of year, as we explore our own formation, identity, and vocation as disciples of Jesus, Isaiah entreats us, “Look to the rock from which you were hewn” (51:1). Envisioning Peter the “rock” (Matt. 16:18), we might also consider how we are “chips off the old block” of our forebears in faith.

COMMENTS FROM THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Peter, who before was called Simon, receives from the Lord the name of Peter, because of the strength and constancy of his faith; for with a firm and tenacious soul he clung to him of whom it was written, “And the rock was Christ.” And this rock, that is, the Lord Savior, who gave to him who knew him, loved him, and confessed him, the privilege of sharing his name, said that he would be called Peter, from Petra (the rock), upon which the church is built. For only through the faith and the love of Christ, through receiving the sacraments of Christ, through keeping the commandments of Christ, can we come to share in the lot of the elect and to eternal life.

—Bede

[Bede, in *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, III, 273.]

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

AUGUST 24: BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE

Mentioned as one of Jesus' disciples in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Bartholomew's name is replaced in John's gospel by Nathanael, leading many to believe that the two are different names for the same person. Little is known about his work, though some traditions place him later in India or Armenia.

AUGUST 28: AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO, † 430; MOSES THE BLACK, MONK, MARTYR, † AROUND 400

Augustine was one of the greatest theologians of the Western church. A native of North Africa, he recovered from a debauched young adulthood through the influence of his mother, Monica, and Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Moses, converted from life as a thief and a robber, was an Ethiopian who became a desert monk at Skete; the change in his heart had a profound impact on his native country, and he was murdered when Berber bandits attacked his monastery.



SERVING TODAY

Worship Leader.....	Pastor Paul Tomkiel
Assisting Minister.....	Art Reede
Musicians.....	Jacob Heller
Sacristan.....	Karen Magnuson
Reader.....	Ann Reede

ABOUT ST. PAUL

PURPOSE

We are a beacon, boldly sharing the light of Jesus' grace and love.

MISSION

Guided by Jesus, we strengthen faith, deepen compassion, extend generosity,
and serve community.

CORE VALUES

Faith ♡ Compassion ♡ Generosity ♡ Community

OUR BIBLE VERSES

As Paul was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
[Jesus said,] 'Paul is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before the nations.' – Acts 9:3,15

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Paul is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Conestoga-Susquehannock people, where we gather. We also acknowledge the Seneca, Cayuga, Lenape, as well as all of our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place – this land – and call it their home.

Find out more about the Conestoga-Susquehannock at www.conestogasusquehannocktribe.com

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