



St. Peter's Lutheran Church
Highspire
Pentecost 15
September 6, 2026

Introduction

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

Overview

Called to Community

Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20). In these Sundays after Pentecost, we are repeatedly reminded that God has not abandoned us and that Christ's resurrection and ascension are a beginning for us, not an end. The readings this week focus on the practical work of the gathered Christian community: turning from sin to repentance, from conflict to reconciliation. The question is as relevant today as it was for the disciples and the first Christians: How do we live together, work together, as the body of Christ? We have been saved by grace, liberated by God's love to love one another. What does it mean for us and for our community to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14) and to clothe ourselves in love?

We keep asking these questions because the way we gather as Christians continues to be profoundly countercultural. We do not gather as a social club, drawn and kept together only by shared demographics and interests. If church is only a social club, there is no reason to continue to gather if conflict arises, if uncomfortable issues are raised, or if "the way it's always been" begins to change. If church is only a social club, there is no reason to do the hard work of reconciliation and forgiveness.

God calls us into community knowing that being in community is hard. In scripture we can find practical guidance for gathering through good and hard times. The Holy Spirit is always at work—in, through, and among us—to gather and regather us again. In community we meet and become Christ's body in ways that are impossible for us as individuals; all the commandments are fulfilled in this call to neighbor-love (Rom. 13:9).

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

"As We Gather at Your Table"

Deb Dillane

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 “As We Gather at Your Table”

ELW #522

*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 O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

The Word

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

First Reading: Ezekiel 33: 7-11

God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God’s warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.

7 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. 8 If 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. 9 But 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.

10 Now 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?" 11 Say 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?

L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: Psalm 119:33-40 (read responsively)

I desire the path of your commandments. (Ps. 119:35)

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 teaching;
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

35 Lead me 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 beholding falsehood;
give me life in your way.

**38 Fulfill your promise to your servant,
which is for those who fear you.**

39 Turn away the reproach that I dread,
because your judgments are good.

**40 Behold, I long for your commandments;
by your righteousness enliven me.**

Second Reading: Romans 13:8-14

The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.

8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 The 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." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

11 Besides 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; 12 the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; 13 let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

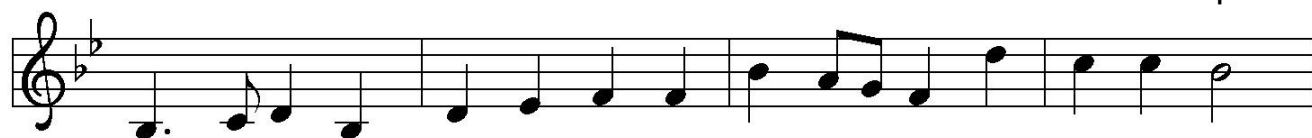
L The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

"Alleluia! Lord and Savior"

ELW p. 205



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav - ing word.



Let it burn like fire with - in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

***GOSPEL Matthew 18:15-20**

Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.

P The holy gospel according to Matthew

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

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 15 "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. 16 But 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. 17 If 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. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in

heaven. 19 Again, 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. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Alex

SERMON

Pastor Alex

*HYMN OF THE DAY "Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace" ELW #716

*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 Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Proclaiming God, empower your church throughout the world to announce the words you give us. Open us to receive your word in unexpected ways. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Forming God, renew the cycles of your creation that provide 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.**

Governing God, turn all who create, enforce, or interpret legislation away from selfish gain and toward your promise of good for all, especially the good of all who labor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Attending God, wake us up to any around us who are in need. Restore broken relationships, failing health, frayed emotions, and the hurts we carry with us. We pray especially for *Don Alsedek, Connie Barner, Rachel Benkovic, Rose Hoover, Samson Kennedy, Bernie Kunz, and Rob Lipsitt*. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gathering God, 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.

Loving God, 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.**

P Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

C Amen.

*PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Fugue in G Major"

Deb Dillane

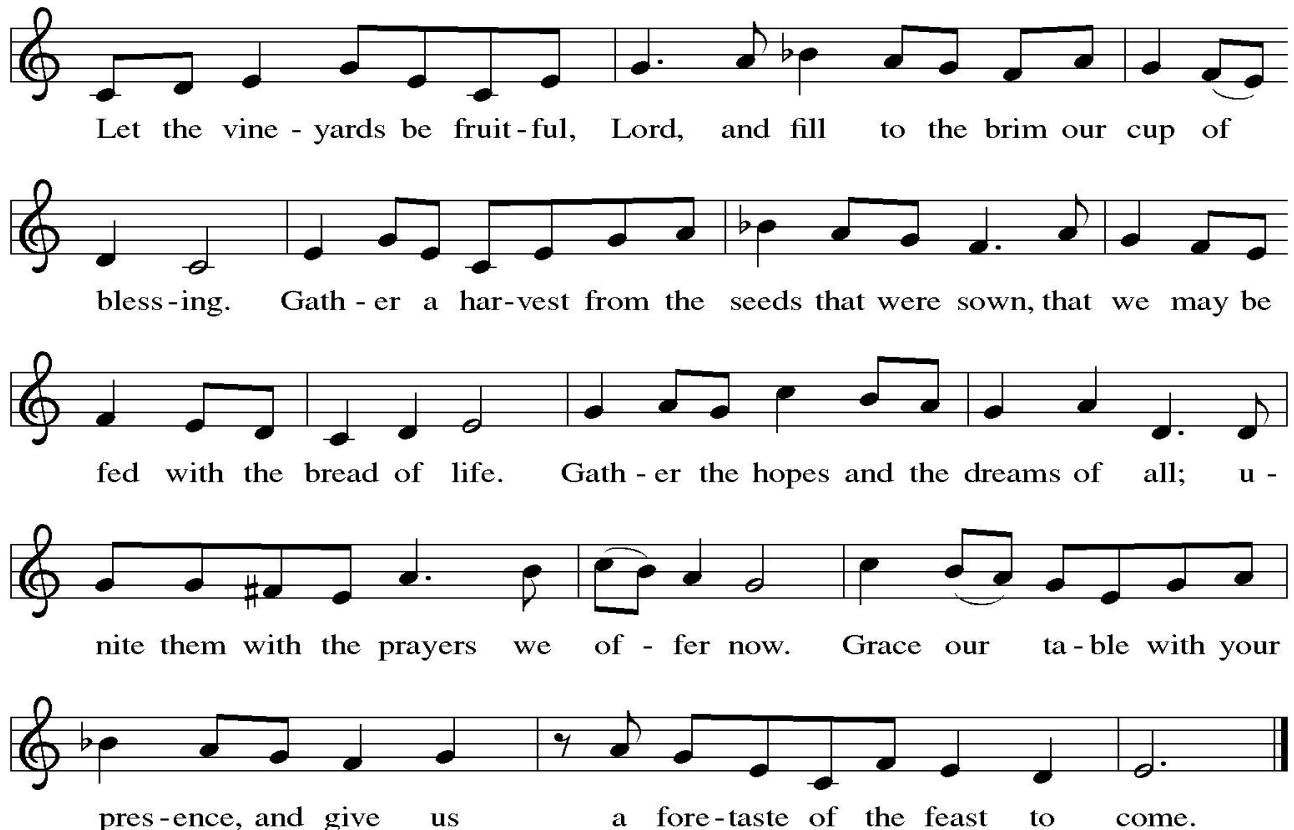
The Meal

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 God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always.

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

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:

*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.

C 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 Christ invites you to this table.

All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

COMMUNION HYMNS:

"Lamb of God"

ELW p.208

"In the Singing" ***

ELW #466

"Come Now, O Prince of Peace"

ELW #247

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

C Amen.

The Sending

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

*BLESSING

P The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit. **Amen.**

The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

*SENDING HYMN "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" ***

ELW #836

*DISMISSAL

A Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

"Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"

Deb Dillane

We appreciate Deb Dillane for sharing her musical talent with us this morning. Thank-you.

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Prelude - "As We Gather at Your Table" - Michael Burkhardt @1994 MorningStar Music Deb Dillane, organ
Gathering Hymn - "As We Gather at Your Table" ELW #522 words - Carl P. Daw, Jr. music - arr. Julius Rontgen @1989 Hope Publishing Co. IN BABILONE
Gospel Acclamation - "Alleluia! Lord and Savior" p. 205, setting 10
Hymn of the Day - "Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace" ELW #716 words - Olive Wise Spannaus music - Samotulsky Kancional(1561) BEATUS VIR @1969 Concordia Publishing House
Special Music - "Fugue in G Major" J. S. Bach Deb Dillane, organ solo
Offertory Hymn - "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful " ELW #182 words - John W. Arthur music - Richard Hillert @1978 Augsburg Fortress Publishers
"Holy, Holy, Holy" p.207, setting 10 ELW
Distribution of Communion - Lamb of God, p. 208 ELW
"In the Singing" ELW #466 words - Shirley Arena Murray music - Carlton R. Young @1996 Hope Publishing Co. BREAD OF PEACE ***
"Come Now, O Prince of Peace" ELW #247 words & music - Geonyong Lee OSOSO @Geonyong Lee, GIA Publications Inc.
Sending hymn - "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" ELW #836 words - Henry van Dyke music - Ludwig van Beethoven PUBLIC DOMAIN ***
Postlude - "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee" Michael D. Costello @2008 MorningStar Music from "God Will Guide You: 5 Hymn Arrangements for Organ" Music Deb Dillane, organ

*** Congregational Favorite

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.

Special Music for September

9/13/26 - Pentecost 16 - Praise Team

9/20/26 - Pentecost 17 - Pick-Up Choir

Worship Participants for September 6, 2026

Presiding Minister	Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt
Music Director	Stephen Strauss
Worship Assistant	Patrick Hawkins
Musician	Deb Dillane
Lector	Matthew Hunt

Worship Participants for September 13, 2026

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

ALTAR VASES: Presented to the Glory of God by Randy and Grace Hoover in memory of Harold Hoover's birthday anniversary on September 11th.

CENTERPIECE: Presented to the Glory of God by Steve and Clydene Strauss in memory of Clydene's grandmother, Sarah Hallbon, whose birthday anniversary is September 6th.

All are Welcome Bible Study

The All are Welcome Bible Study meets on Tuesday nights at 6:30pm. We are currently reading Isaiah. 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 .

CHOIR REHEARSALS: Mark Your Calendars! This Wednesday, **September 9th**, there will be rehearsal for the **Praise Team**. Our choir rehearsals for this season will start on **September 23, 2026** with **Bell Choir at 6:30pm and Choir at 7:00 pm**. Join us at rehearsals and offer your talents to the Lord through music! Any questions, call or text Steve at 717-265-6854.

ADULT FAITH FORMATION: Beginning on **Wednesday September 16th** there will be an adult faith formation session at **St. Peter's at 1:00 PM** and on **Thursday September 17th** there will be an adult faith formation session at **St. Michael at 5:30 PM**. More details to come. Stay tuned!

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.

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.