



# APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH

**THE REVEREND JAY SERAFIN**

7092 Main Street, Gloucester, VA 23061

(804) 693-9098 | [apostles-elca.org](http://apostles-elca.org) | [facebook.com/ApostlesELCA](https://facebook.com/ApostlesELCA)



## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The parable of the vineyard workers (Matthew 20:1-16)

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 | 10:00 AM**

Our Mission is to be a Caring Inclusive Christian Community responding to God's grace through  
Worship, Service, and Sharing the Gospel.



**RECONCILING *in* CHRIST**



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# WELCOME TO APOSTLES LUTHERAN CHURCH!

It is an honor to worship God with you this morning. We pray you experience the Spirit's loving presence as we share our words, our actions, and the Holy Meal.

**If this is your first time worshipping with us, please fill out a card in the pew rack with your contact info.** A restroom can be found by exiting the rear door of the worship space. It is directly in front of you to the right. Additional restrooms can be found in the back corner of the fellowship area, near the Pastor's office.

## RECONCILING *in* CHRIST

We, the people of Apostles Lutheran Church, follow Paul's message to the Galatians (3:28): "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Believing that because we are all one in Christ, and created in God's image, all are welcome as beloved children of God. We welcome into the full life of the church all those whom God sends us. **Rejoicing in God's amazing diversity, we welcome people of all ages, races, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, and physical and mental abilities.** Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to racial equity, breaking down dividing walls and building a community where all are beloved.

## FOR PASTORAL CARE

The Reverend Jay Serafin is our pastor. Pastor Jay's **schedule is noted in the calendar on the back of this bulletin.** Call Pastor Jay at 570-205-7506 or email him at [j80j84@msn.com](mailto:j80j84@msn.com) (preferred) or [pastor.apostles@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.apostles@gmail.com). Messages can also be left on the Apostles answering machine 804-693-9098.

## PRAYGROUND

Welcome to our youngest members! The area in the front of our sanctuary is for families and young children. There are quiet toys, books and drawing materials. **We ask two things: 1) sit in the front pews near your children and 2) please sit with your children in the pews during the sermon.** They may return immediately after. Thank you and welcome!

## NAME TAGS

**Please wear your nametag!** Guests: please fill out and put on a name tag before worship today. Blank nametags are in the baskets located in the pews.

# GATHERING

*Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.*

## PRELUDE AND SILENT PRAYER

*Martin Luther said of music: "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." Please take a moment to **silence all cell phones**.*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Please rise in body or in spirit. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

**Amen.**

Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Compassionate God,

**we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others.**

**Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Hear this good news: We have peace with God through † Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

**Amen.**

## GATHERING HYMN

ELW #685

### "Take My Life, That I May Be"



- 1 Take my life, that I may be con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;
- 2 Take my hands and let them move at the im - pulse of thy love;
- 3 Take my voice and let me sing al - ways, on - ly, for my King;
- 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, not a mite would I with - hold;



take my mo - ments and my days; let them flow in cease - less praise.  
take my feet and let them be swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.  
take my lips and let them be filled with mes - sag - es from thee.  
take my in - tel - lect, and use ev - 'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879, alt.

Music: PATMOS, William H. Havergal, 1793–1870

## APOSTOLIC GREETING

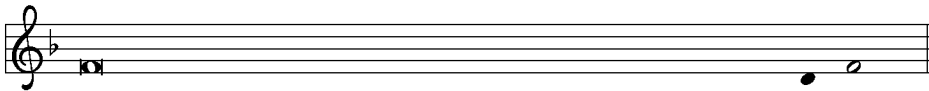
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## KYRIE



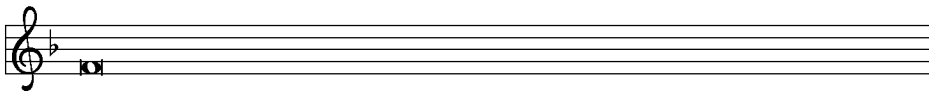
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



**Lord, have mer - cy.**



For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

## CANTICLE OF PRAISE

*Refrain*

This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,

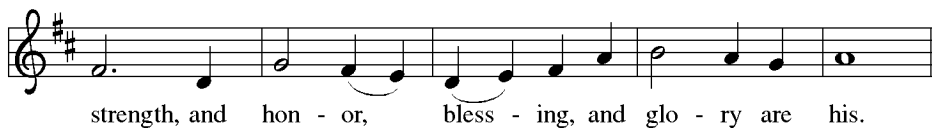
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb

who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.

*Refrain*

This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich - es, wis - dom, and



strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.

*Refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of



God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon-or,



glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

*Refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was



slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Final refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.



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

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

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

*Sit*

### FIRST READING

### JONAH 3:10—4:11

*After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?*

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it.

<sup>4:1</sup> But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup> He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. <sup>3</sup> And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup> And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" <sup>5</sup> Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. <sup>7</sup> But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on

the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

<sup>9</sup> But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." <sup>10</sup> Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup> And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

*Response after the First Reading*

The word of the LORD.

**Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM

## PSALM 145:1-8

- <sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, my <sup>1</sup> God and king,  
and bless your name forev- <sup>1</sup> er and ever.
- <sup>2</sup> **Every day <sup>1</sup> will I bless you  
and praise your name forev- <sup>1</sup> er and ever.**
- <sup>3</sup> Great is the Lord and greatly <sup>1</sup> to be praised!  
There is no end <sup>1</sup> to your greatness.
- <sup>4</sup> **One generation shall praise your works <sup>1</sup> to another  
and shall de- <sup>1</sup> clare your power. R**
- <sup>5</sup> I will speak of the glorious splendor <sup>1</sup> of your majesty  
and all your <sup>1</sup> marvelous works.
- <sup>6</sup> **They shall tell of the might of your <sup>1</sup> wondrous acts,  
and I will re- <sup>1</sup> count your greatness.**
- <sup>7</sup> They shall publish the remembrance of <sup>1</sup> your great goodness;  
they shall sing joyfully <sup>1</sup> of your righteousness.
- <sup>8</sup> **The Lord is gracious and full <sup>1</sup> of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in <sup>1</sup> steadfast love. R**

## SECOND READING

## PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

*Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.*

<sup>21</sup> For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, <sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup> Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup> so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.

<sup>27</sup> Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel <sup>28</sup> and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. <sup>29</sup> For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, <sup>30</sup> since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

*Response after the Second Reading*

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Please rise in body or in spirit.*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the  
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*The gospel is announced.*

*All are invited to make a small cross over your forehead, lips, and chest, inviting Jesus the Word into your heart, mind, and speech.*

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

## **GOSPEL**

## **MATTHEW 20:1-16**

*Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup> When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup> and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. <sup>5</sup> When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup> And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup> They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' <sup>8</sup> When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' <sup>9</sup> When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup> saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' <sup>13</sup> But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup> Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup> So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

*The gospel concludes:*

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Silence is kept after the reflection.*

*Please rise in body or in spirit.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY****ELW #358****"Great God, Your Love Has Called Us"**

1 Great God, your love has called us here, as we, by love, for  
 2 We come with self - in - flict - ed pains of bro - ken trust and  
 3 Great God, in Christ you call our name and then re - ceive us  
 4 Then take the towel, and break the bread, and hum - ble us, and  
 5 Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your



love were made. Your liv - ing like - ness still we bear,  
 cho - sen wrong, half - free, half - bound by in - ner chains,  
 as your own, not through some mer - it, right, or claim,  
 call us friends. Suf - fer and serve till all are fed,  
 joy to share. Give us your Spir - it's lib - er - ty



though marred, dis - hon - ored, dis - o - beyed. We come, with all our  
 by so - cial forc - es swept a - long, by pow'rs and sys - tems  
 but by your gra - cious love a - lone. We strain to glimpse your  
 and show how grand - ly love in - tends to work till all cre -  
 to turn from guilt and dull de - spair, and of - fer all that



heart and mind your call to hear, your love to find.  
 close con - fined, yet seek - ing hope for hu - man - kind.  
 mer - cy seat and find you kneel - ing at our feet.  
 a - tion sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.  
 faith can do while love is mak - ing all things new.

Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936

Music: RYBURN, Norman Cocker, 1889–1953

Text © 1977, rev. 1995 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Music © Oxford University Press. Used by permission.

## **APOSTLES CREED**

With the whole church, let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles 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  
power of 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**

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

*Each portion of the prayers ends with these words:*

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

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.

**Amen.**

## SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*We share a sign of Peace with our neighbors saying **Peace be with you** to which we respond **And also with you.** Please know that it is fine if you do not want to shake hands but would rather just share a sign of peace.*

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

*Sit*

## OFFERING

*An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.*

*To give online:*

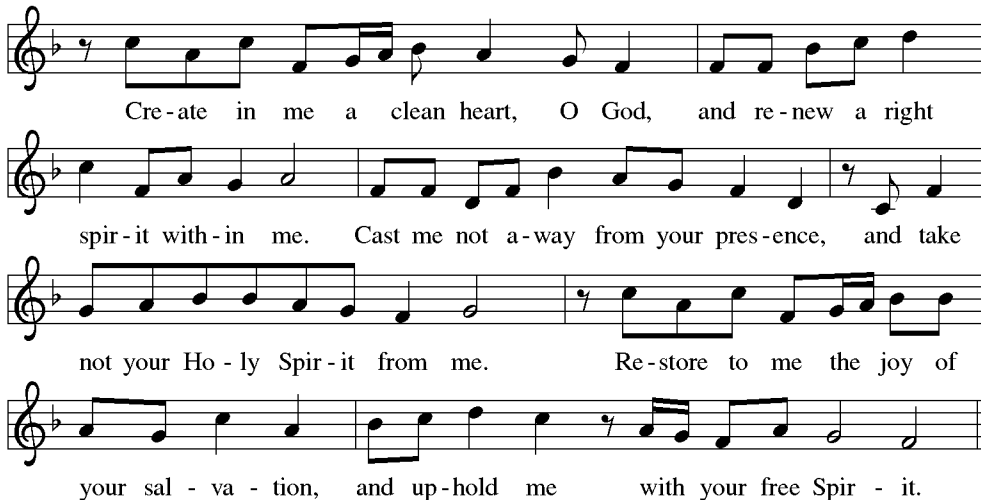
✚ Visit [apostles-elca.org/contributions](https://apostles-elca.org/contributions)

✚ From your mobile phone, text the word GIVE to 844-215-5453

*Please rise in body or in spirit.*

## OFFERTORY HYMN

**ELW #186**



Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take  
not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re - store to me the joy of  
your sal - va - tion, and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923

Music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

## OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. 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.

**Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

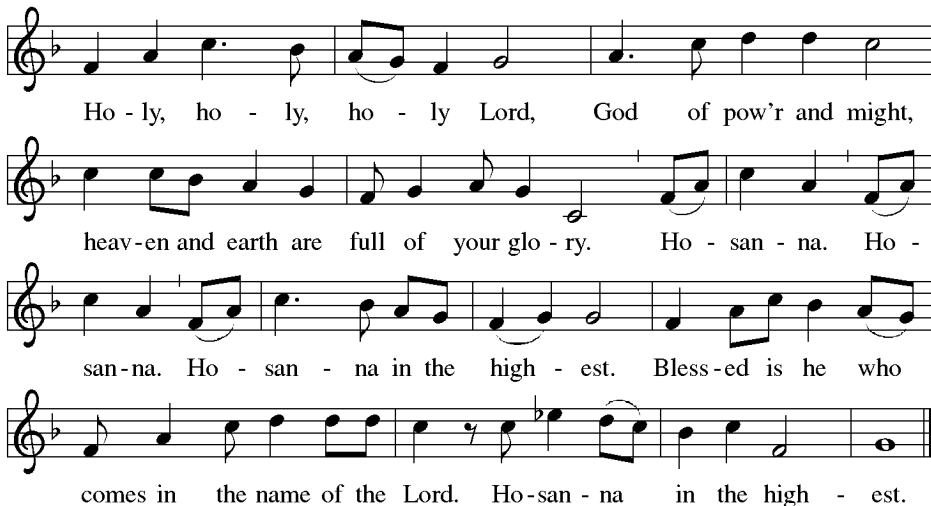
**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*The great thanksgiving continues.*

... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -  
san-na. 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.

*The great thanksgiving continues.*

... with every breath.

**We praise you, O God.**

*The great thanksgiving continues.*

... into the future.

**We bless you, O God.**

*The great thanksgiving continues.*

... with us now.

**We thank you, O God.**

*The great thanksgiving continues.*

... we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

*The great thanksgiving concludes.*

... Blessing, praise, and thanks to you, holy God, through Christ Jesus, by your Spirit,  
in your church, without end.

**Amen.**

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

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.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Christ invites you to this table.

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

*Sit*

## COMMUNION

*All are invited to join us at the Lord's table to receive the presence of Jesus through the bread and wine. Jesus himself invites you and Jesus turns no one away.*

*You will be invited to come forward either to receive the elements or to receive a blessing.*

*For those receiving the elements, after receiving the bread, please take a glass from the tray held by the acolyte. There are pre-filled glasses of grape juice in the tray for those who do not drink wine. Gluten free wafers are also available upon request.*

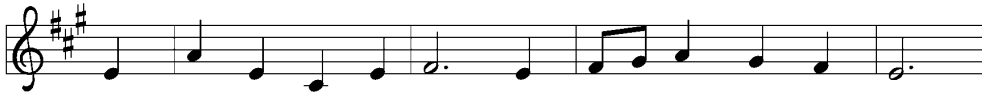
## LAMB OF GOD

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.

## HYMN DURING COMMUNION

**ELW #669**

**"Rise Up, O Saints of God!"**



- 1 Rise up, O saints of God! From vain am - bi - tions turn;
- 2 Speak out, O saints of God! De - spair en - gulf's earth's frame;
- 3 Rise up, O saints of God! The king - dom's task em - brace;
- 4 Give heed, O saints of God! Cre - a - tion cries in pain;
- 5 Com - mit your hearts to seek the paths which Christ has trod;



Christ rose tri - um - phant that your hearts with no - bler zeal might burn.  
as heirs of God's bap - tis - mal grace, the word of hope pro - claim.  
re - dress sin's cru - el con - se - quence; give jus - tice larg - er place.  
stretch forth your hand of heal - ing now, with love the weak sus - tain.  
and, quick - ened by the Spir - it's pow'r, rise up, O saints of God!

Text: Norman O. Forness, b. 1936

Music: FESTAL SONG, William H. Walter, 1825–1893

Text © Norman O. Forness, admin. Augsburg Fortress

*After all have returned to their places, all rise in body or in spirit.*

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

**Amen.**

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray. 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.

**Amen.**

## **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission back into the world.*

## **BLESSING**

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

ELW #765

### "Lord of All Hopefulness"



1 Lord of all hope - ful - ness, Lord of all joy,  
2 Lord of all ea - ger - ness, Lord of all faith,  
3 Lord of all kind - li - ness, Lord of all grace,  
4 Lord of all gen - tle - ness, Lord of all calm,



whose trust, ev - er child - like, no cares could de - stroy:  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe:  
your hands swift to wel - come, your arms to em - brace:  
whose voice is con - tent - ment, whose pres - ence is balm:



be there at our wak - ing, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our la - bors, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our hom - ing, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our sleep - ing, and give us, we pray,



your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Text: Jan Struther, 1901–1953  
Music: SLANE, Irish traditional  
Text © Oxford University Press 1931.

## DISMISSAL

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE

\*\*\*\*\*

## THANK YOU TO ...

**Kathy Merithew** for playing for our service this morning!!!

### WORSHIP LEADERS

|                               | Serving Today            | Serving Next Week  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Worship Leader/Preacher ..... | Pastor Jay Serafin ..... | Pastor Jay Serafin |
| Lay Assisting Minister .....  | Doug Dalager .....       | Linda Hodges       |
| Lector .....                  | Chase Ambrose .....      | Judy Wright        |
| Acolyte .....                 | David Muse .....         | Tegan Goetz        |
| Accompanist .....             | Kathy Merithew .....     | -                  |
| Altar Care .....              | Jamie Serafin .....      | Judy Wright        |
| Communion Bread .....         | Lowes .....              | Donna Ambrose      |
| Flowers .....                 | Jamie Serafin .....      | Angie Goetz        |
| Greeter/Usher .....           | Cyndi Lowe .....         | Judy Wright        |
| Technology .....              | Jason Lowe .....         | Chris Hawkins      |

### SERVANTS FOR THE WEEK

|                           | Serving This Week               | Serving Next Week          |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cleaning Team .....       | Liljebergs .....                | Bonnie Hanson              |
| Tellers .....             | Barbara Runk/Tonia Fallin ..... | Linda Hodges/Chris Hawkins |
| Fellowship Set Up .....   | Caring Community .....          | Jennie Hawkins             |
| Fellowship Food .....     | Jamie Serafin .....             | Picnic                     |
| Fellowship Clean Up ..... | Jamie Serafin .....             | Donna Ambrose/Barbara Runk |

## READINGS FOR NEXT SUNDAY EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

**First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**

*The fairness of God's way*

**Psalms 25:1-9**

*Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love.*

**Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13**

*Christ humbled to the point of death on a cross*

**Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32**

*A parable of doing God's will*

## **DISCOMFORT: SIGN OF GRACE?**

Poor Jonah. The guy never could get comfortable. He was uncomfortable with his God-given call to preach to Nineveh; he was uncomfortable in the arms of the sailors as they hoisted him over the boat's edge and tossed him into the sea; he was uncomfortable as the ocean's raging waves flung him about like flotsam; he was—undoubtedly—uncomfortable in the fish's belly; and he was uncomfortable and downright angry with God's mercy on the people of Nineveh. Jonah had a hard time getting comfortable with himself, and, even more so, Jonah was uneasy embracing the wideness of God's grace.

The same can be said about the laborers in Jesus' parable here in Matthew 20. The laborers who came in the early morning hours grumbled against the landowner because they were paid the same as others who started later and worked fewer hours. These laborers are ill-at-ease with the landowner's choice "to give to this last the same as I give to you" (Matt. 20:14). Like Jonah, they are uncomfortable with the unchecked mercy offered by the landowner/God. God doesn't play by our rules, and that can be very discomfoting for us all.

Our discomfort with grace manifests itself in all sorts of ways. It can be discomfoting for us to engage the poor and the outcast of our society. It can be discomfoting for us to welcome immigrants into our communities. It can be discomfoting to address the pervasive racism that still surrounds us. And it can be very discomfoting for us to open our lives to the transforming power of the cross of Christ, whereby "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).

Could it be that the more uncomfortable we become with the reckless love of God, the closer we are to understanding the meaning of grace?

## **ADULT BIBLE STUDY POSTPONED**

This week's Adult Bible Study has been postponed for now. Stay tuned in the coming weeks for an announcement about when we'll resume.

## **ATTENTION ALL YOUTH!**

Gloucester Youth in Unity will have a **Back To School Game Night** on **Friday, September 25th, from 6:00-8:00 PM** at St. Therese located at 6262 Main Street. All youth in grades 6-12 are welcome to come and bring a friend!!

## **THEOLOGIAN IN RESIDENCE**

Please join us for a Theologian In Residence program at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Williamsburg on **Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM**. The theologian is Kimberly Knowle-Zeller, writer, pastor and author exploring faith, creation and everyday wonder. She will be speaking on "God of the Cosmos: How God Walks with Us in Our Everyday Lives." If you would like additional information, please contact Janet Gomez.

## **OUTDOOR WORSHIP NEXT SUNDAY!**

Please join us for an outdoor worship service **next Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM**. We will gather outside under the big oak tree for worship and then enjoy a picnic lunch afterwards in the fellowship hall. Come and enjoy God's creation as we worship!! Bring a chair!!

## **NEW MEMBERS**

We will be receiving new members during worship on **Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>** – if you are interested in becoming a member, please talk with Pastor Jay!

## **PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS**

**Rich Bitting, Manning Freeman, Don Garfield, Heidi Henderson,  
Ellen Kendzierski, Doug Leip, David Leunig, Cyndi Lowe, Ellen Quirk,  
Michael Schlemmer, Ray Scholz, Keith & Juanita Sturdy, George & Jewel Thomas,  
Lena Woodlief, and Judy Wright**

## **OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

**Natalie Abu Dayyeh, Patricia Armentor** (mother of Arlene, Executive Director of Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic), **Paul Bauer, Karen Bell** (Pam Moore's sister), **Bob & Dixie, Calli Bonfey, Patricia Boyd & Brad Zelmer, Amanda Brown, David Brown, Dennis & Dorothy Brown, Sally Burkholder, Juan Carlos, Amy Carter, Laura Clodfelter, Jackie Collier, Ben Davis** (friend of Donna Ambrose), **Tommy & Kathie Davis, Jenny DeSha, Linda Edwards, Colton Elliot** (Michael Schlemmer's cousin), **Teresa Floersheim-Miller** (Ingrid Peterson's mother), **Suzanne & Frank Gibson, Steven Godwin** (Juanita Sturdy's grandson), **Jimmy & Fay Gray** (Chris Hawkins' family), **Carl Greene, Karen Guire, Melvin Hawkins** (Chris Hawkins' father), **Chaneice & Daniel Hayden, Rosie Heins, Carl & Kaleb Hess, Aris Hibbs** (friend of Ray Scholz), **Ray Hughes, Scott Jeffery, Suzanne Kinkade** (friend of Ellen Quirk), **Terri Larsen, Marion Lucier, Wayne Mathews, Wayne McCormick, Sylvia Midgette** (Krystle McMahan's grandmother), **Debbie Minteins, Keith Morgan, Gary Mowery, Jamie Mullaney, Carol Pascale** (Lynn Jaeger's mother), **Chastity Perkins** (co-worker and friend of Donna Ambrose), **Brad Person** (Lilly Frost's uncle), **Dick Peterson & his brother, the Prusa Family, Joan Ritter, Glen Robertson, Pastor Wendy Roundy, Carol Schlemmer, Daniel Schmidt, Michael Scholz** (Ray Scholz's nephew), **Joseph Serafin** (Pastor Jay's father), **Kathy Shackleford, Elana Sierson, Fred Smith, Tammy Smith, Jean Sterling, Skye Sulton, Marier Upshrie, Keegan Walls, Williams Walters, Chuck Webb** (Tina Britt's father), **Makenzie Webb** (Tina Britt's niece), **Elizabeth & Steven White, Vicki Williams, Cory Woodlief, Jim Wright** (Judy Wright's husband), **Logan & Shannon Wymer, Derek Zwiers** (friend of CK Ambrose)

## **OUR SPONSORED CHILDREN IN GUATEMALA**

**Amayra, Hugolino, Manuela, and Pablo**

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

There is a book located at the rear of the worship space for you to write any prayer requests you have for today. Fill out a "Prayer Request" (on the back of each pew) and place it in the offering plate to add a prayer request to the "Prayer List" included in the bulletin and the newsletter. **Please print legibly!**

# **THIS WEEK AT APOSTLES**

## **SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 – SEPTEMBER 27, 2026**

|                  |                           |                                                      |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TODAY</b>     | <b>10:00 AM</b>           | <b>Worship Service &amp;<br/>World Hunger Sunday</b> |
|                  | 11:00 AM                  | Coffee Fellowship                                    |
| <b>MONDAY</b>    | <b>10:00 AM – 1:00 PM</b> | <b>Pastor Jay in the Office</b>                      |
|                  | 6:00 PM                   | Al-Anon/AA                                           |
| <b>TUESDAY</b>   | <b>10:00 AM – 1:00 PM</b> | <b>Pastor Jay in the Office</b>                      |
|                  | 6:00 PM                   | Al-Anon/AA                                           |
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b> |                           |                                                      |
| <b>THURSDAY</b>  | 2:30 PM                   | Preaching Guild                                      |
| <b>FRIDAY</b>    |                           | Girl Scouts                                          |
| <b>SATURDAY</b>  | 5:30 PM                   | Young and Sober                                      |
| <b>SUNDAY</b>    | <b>10:00 AM</b>           | <b>Outdoor Worship Service</b>                       |
|                  | 11:00 AM                  | Picnic                                               |

**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO ...**  
**Keith and Juanita Sturdy – Sat, Sep 26**

