



ST PAUL

PINE GROVE MILLS

A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST
OCTOBER 18, 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

God uses even a Gentile ruler, Cyrus, to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus with a question about taxes, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him—and God what belongs to God. Gathering for worship today reminds you that your deepest allegiance belongs to God before it belongs to any nation, party, or cause. Made in God's image, you are invited to offer your whole self—not just a portion—in service to God and the world.

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 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.**

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 “Be Thou My Vision” (ELW 793)

1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
 2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
 3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
 4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,

naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
 I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
 thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
 may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!

thou my best thought both by day and by night,
 Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
 thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
 raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
 great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860–1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880–1931
 Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

*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. Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **A: Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 45:1-7

The Babylonian Empire had destroyed Jerusalem and taken the leaders of Judah into exile in their capital city. It seemed that God had abandoned them, and that there was no chance that the exiles would ever be allowed to return home and rebuild, despite the promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel that that is what would happen. Now the Persian empire rose suddenly to power and under Cyrus defeated Babylon and sent the captive populations home. Cyrus, a Gentile and seemingly ignorant of his place in fulfilling God's promises, is hailed as God's anointed (in Hebrew, a messiah).

¹ Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to
Cyrus,

whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:

² I will go before you
and level the mountains;
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron;

³ I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the
LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your
name.

⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name;
I give you a title, though you do not
know me.

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know
me,

⁶ so that they may know, from the rising
of the sun
and from the west, that there is no
one besides me;

I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

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

PSALM 96 *sung to Lyons (ELW 825)*

Like the first reading, this psalm affirms that God is not simply the god of Israel, but the ruler of the universe, whose mighty acts direct world history.

- 1 O sing to the Lord, a new song now sing.
O sing to the Lord, all earth Your praise bring.
- 2 O sing to the Lord and give praise to His name,
And day after day His salvation proclaim.
- 3 Among nations all His glory declare,
His marvelous deeds to folk everywhere.
- 4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
He is to be feared above all gods always.
- 5 For all of the gods of nations are vain,
The Lord made the heav'ns, and o'er them does reign.
- 6 Before Him are splendor and great majesty,
Strength, glory are there in His sanc-tu-ar-y.
- 7 Ascribe to the Lord, O fam'lies of earth,
Ascribe to the Lord strength, glory, and worth.
- 8 Ascribe to the Lord glory due to His name;
Bring offerings and come to His courts; praise proclaim.
- 9 O worship the Lord in splendor of all
His holiness; come and tremble in awe.
- 10 Say unto the nations, "The Lord alone reigns!"
The world is established; it firmly remains.
He will judge the peoples with equity,
- 11 Let heavens rejoice; let earth joyful be.
Let seas all resound and all that is in them;
- 12 Let fields all be joyous, with all things in them.
Then all of the trees will sing forth with joy.
- 13 They'll sing to the Lord; all praise they'll employ,
Because He is coming, the earth's judge to be—
He'll judge earth, all peoples, with true equity.

SECOND READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

This Sunday we begin a continuous reading through what is probably the oldest book in the New Testament. It is a letter from Paul and his two co-workers to a community he founded and continues to have affection for. Like the other readings for late October and November, this book pays significant attention to the end of time and the return of Christ.

¹ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace to you and peace.

² We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸ For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹ For they report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

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*

Shine like stars | in the world,*

holding fast to the | word of life.

*GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 22:15-22

For the last several weeks, we've heard the parables Jesus told following his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. These stories compare the religious leaders' rejection of the Gospel with the joyful acceptance of it by tax collectors, prostitutes, and other outsiders. Further offended by this treatment, the leaders redouble their opposition to Jesus.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 22nd chapter. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹⁵The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. ¹⁶So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one, for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰Then he said to them, "Whose head is this and whose title?" ²¹They answered, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." ²²When they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away.

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

SERMON

*HYMN OF THE DAY: "Take My Life, That I May Be" (ELW 685)



- 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.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

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

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

***INVITATION TO BAPTISM**

***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 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**

Seeking the Spirit of God who makes all things new, we pray for the church and the world.

A brief silence.

Living and true God, you inspire us to share the message of the gospel. Give your spirit of love to seminarians and those beginning their lives in ordained ministry (*especially*). Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

We give you thanks for the majesty of our oceans. Protect the abundant life within them and sustain all those who work to preserve them. Hear us, O God:

A: Your mercy is great.

We seek your wisdom in all things. Direct all who hold positions of authority around the world, that they act with compassion, seeking the good of all. Hear us, O God:

A: Your mercy is great.

We pray for all people who work in dangerous or degrading environments. Grant them safety and courage, and heal all those who are injured, sick, or suffering (*especially*). Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

We ask your blessing on those who do the quiet, unseen work of the church (*especially*). Encourage them in their work of faith and labor of love. Hear us, O God:

A: Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We thank you for our ancestors who have been called home to you (*especially*). Hear us, O God: **A: Your mercy is great.**

Trusting in your boundless grace, O God, we lift up these spoken prayers and those in our hearts; through 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** “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” (ELW 678) vs. 3

3 Treas-ure, too, you have en-trust-ed, gain through pow'rs your grace con-ferred;
ours to use for home and kin-dred, and to spread the gos - pel word.
O - pen wide our hands in shar-ing, as we heed Christ's age-less call,
heal-ing, teach-ing, and re - claim-ing, serv-ing you by lov-ing all.

Text: Robert L. Edwards, 1915–2006

Music: RUSTINGTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918

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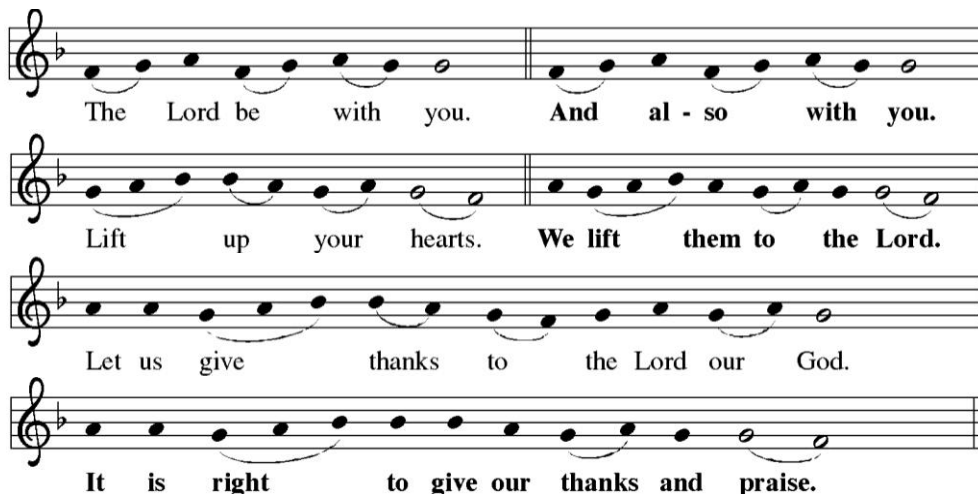
*OFFERING PRAYER

L: 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.

A: Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

* DIALOGUE



The musical notation consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes are simple, mostly quarter and eighth notes, with some rests. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated. 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. It is right to give our thanks and praise."

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

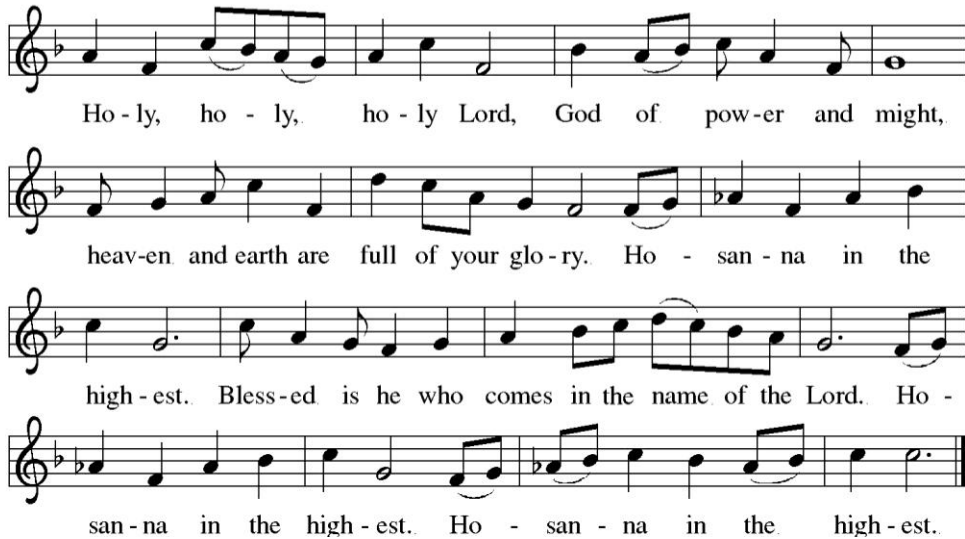
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*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



*THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P: Holy God,
our Bread of life, our Table, and our Food,
you created a world in which all might be satisfied by your abundance.
You dined with Abraham and Sarah, promising them life,
and fed your people Israel with manna from heaven.
You sent your Son to eat with sinners
and to become food for the world.

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 life given for us

and his rising from the grave,
we await his coming again to share with us the everlasting feast.

A: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

By your Spirit nurture and sustain us with this meal:
strengthen us to serve all in hunger and want,
and by this bread and cup make of us the body of 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:

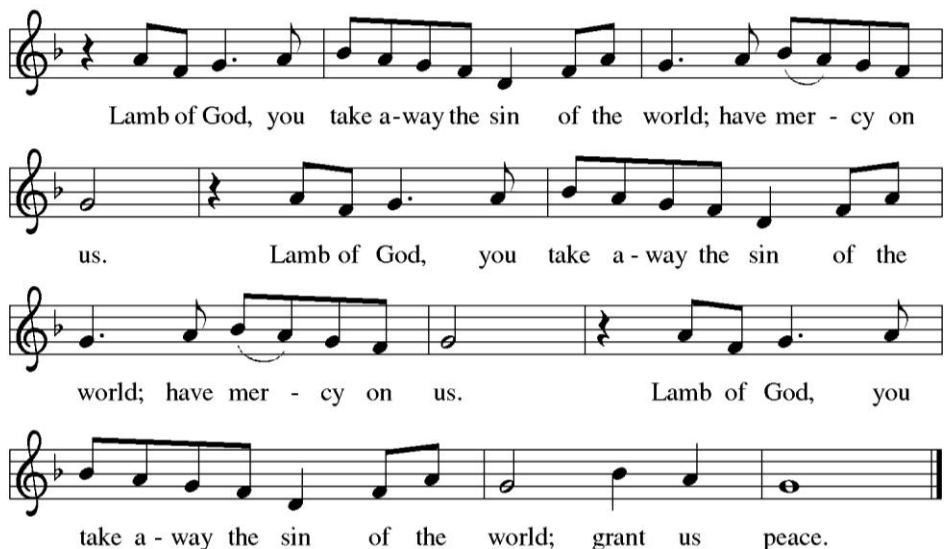
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is 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: Christ invites you to this table. All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

*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

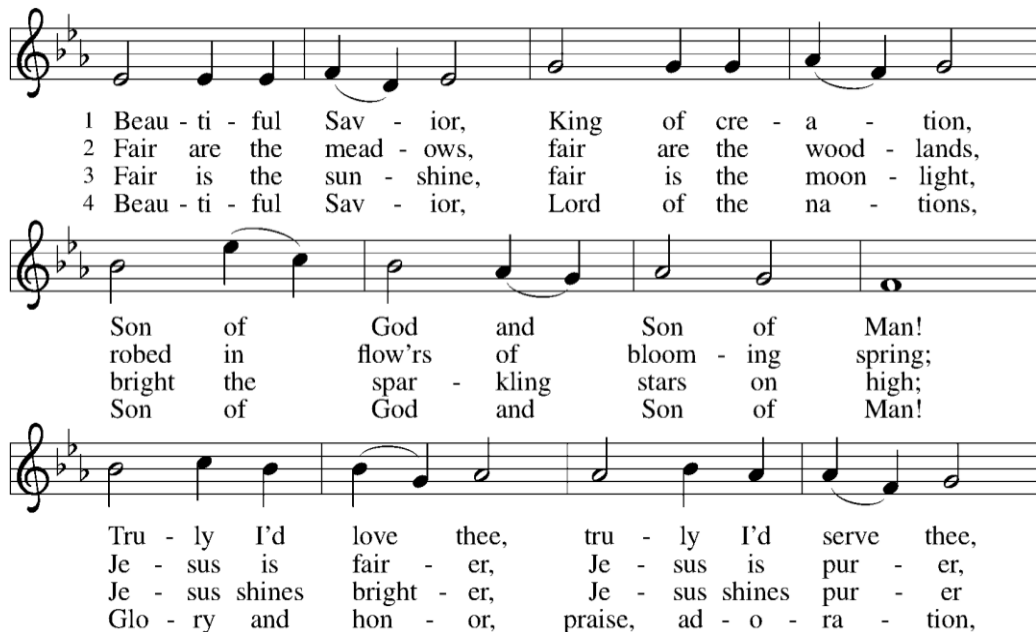
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you

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.**

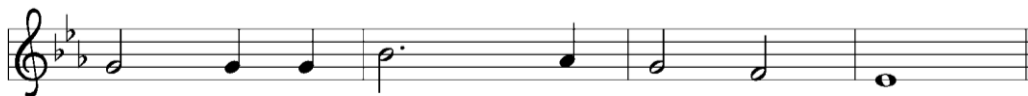
COMMUNION: "Beautiful Savior" (ELW 838)



1 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, King of cre - a - tion,
2 Fair are the mead - ows, fair are the wood - lands,
3 Fair is the sun - shine, fair is the moon - light,
4 Beau - ti - ful Sav - ior, Lord of the na - tions,

Son of God and Son of Man!
robed in flow'rs of bloom - ing spring;
bright the spar - kling stars on high;
Son of God and Son of Man!

Tru - ly I'd love thee, tru - ly I'd serve thee,
Je - sus is fair - er, Je - sus is pur - er,
Je - sus shines bright - er, Je - sus shines pur - er,
Glo - ry and hon - or, praise, ad - o - ra - tion,



light of my soul, my joy, my crown.
he makes our sorrowing spirit sing.
than all the angels in the sky.
now and for ever more be thine!

Text: *Gesangbuch*, Münster, 1677; tr. Joseph A. Seiss, 1823–1904

Music: SCHÖNSTER HERR JESU, Silesian folk tune, 19th cent.

*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 -



pared in the sight of ev-'ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the



na - tions and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.

*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

L: 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. **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.**

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: "God of Grace and God of Glory" (ELW 705)**

1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple
2 Lo! The hosts of e - vil round us scorn the Christ, as -
3 Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils

pour your pow'r; crown your an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;
sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us
your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,
we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion

bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age
rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,
be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.
for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.
lest we miss your king-dom's goal, lest we miss your king-dom's goal.
serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

Text: Harry E. Fosdick, 1878–1969

Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1873–1932

***DISMISSAL**

L: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

A: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

REFLECTIONS FOR AFTER WORSHIP

What's in Your Wallet? Not Enough.

Say the word stewardship in some congregations and people are protectively guarding their wallets faster than you can say “pledge card”! Unfortunately, too often we associate stewardship exclusively with issues of money. The good news is that God wants our whole lives, wallets and all! Nevertheless, this week is prime time for stewardship campaigns in congregations across North America. Today's gospel provides an ideal time to reflect on stewardship of all sorts—time, talent, and financial treasures.

The Pharisees approach Jesus in a thinly veiled attempt to trap him on issues of financial obligations to the Roman government. Their question of Jesus, simplified to the extreme, is, “Who gets your wallet?” If Jesus answered one way, he would be guilty of treason. If he answered the other way, he would have been considered guilty of heresy in the eyes of the religious leaders. Jesus responds by issuing a challenge of his own: “Give . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's” (Matt. 22:21). This statement challenges us to ponder: If God created the world and everything in it, doesn't everything belong to God? God wants a whole lot more than just your wallet. God wants your life, wallet and all!

COMMENTS FROM THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

We are accepted and affirmed by God and so do not need to prove ourselves to him. We have been set free, and our liberation is total and comprehensive—it includes being

set free from political, social and economic structures that are oppressive and unjust, since these would enslave us and make us less than God intends us to be. There is little about “pie in the sky when you die” in the gospel of Jesus Christ, for Christianity is the most materialistic of the major religions. There is nowhere that the writ of God does not run, for everything belongs to him. Caesar must be accorded what is appropriate for him, and God must have all—including Caesar’s domain; otherwise there would be a part of the universe, of life, that did not fall under God’s control.

—Desmond Tutu [Desmond Mpilo Tutu, *Hope and Suffering*, ed. John Webster (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 58-59.]

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

OCTOBER 18: LUKE, EVANGELIST

Identified as the author of both Luke and Acts, Luke was careful to place the events of Jesus’ life in their social and religious contexts. His gospel gives us some of the most beloved parables, as well as the songs of Zechariah, Mary, the angels, and Simeon.

OCTOBER 23: JAMES OF JERUSALEM, MARTYR, † C. 62

One of three early-church leaders named James, this man is identified in the New Testament and by a historian of the time as a brother of Jesus. Scholars are uncertain whether this means a blood brother. He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDING BISHOP

Celebrating Our Diversity, published September 28, 2026

Dear beloved children of God,

As a church, we collectively continue to celebrate the diversity with which God has created the world. Scripture tells us that, from the very beginning, we were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). In the book of Acts, many were gathered in one place when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Each was given the power to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:32-33). In 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, the human body serves as a metaphor, demonstrating that a healthy Christian community relies on the many distinct gifts and qualities of each unique member — emphasizing unity through continuing to be a connected church.

I am thankful to serve this church in the office of presiding bishop. I am also grateful for my experience as an activist and leader in communities and congregations

that are at the margins. Whatever our role and wherever our place in the church, God calls us to develop trusting relationships with our neighbors. In the service of Affirmation of Baptism, the presiding minister asks, “Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism ... to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 236). Striving for justice involves learning about underlying causes of division and inequity. It is a commitment our church makes because of baptism.

Celebrating diversity and striving for equity, inclusion and accessibility for all reflect this baptismal call. The words “diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility” and the initialism “DEIA” mean different things to different people. For the ELCA, as church together, these terms reflect our “delight in the fact that the people called, gathered, and enlightened” by God represent such a wide array of identities, backgrounds and life stories (ELCA social statement *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, 1993, p. 3). The terms remind us of the gospel vision of community, in which all are truly welcome. They are terms this church has chosen to include in its teachings and constitutions as reflections of our faith in God, who creates, redeems and sustains all people.

Everyone matters in this church. I have celebrated with synods and congregations as they build communities that reflect the people and neighborhoods around them. I have worshiped in places where many languages are spoken and people from different backgrounds feel welcome. Together we have expanded our understanding of what it means to be church through relationships with companion churches around the world and through relationships between congregations in rural, urban and suburban settings here in the United States. We are joined together through holy baptism, through which God calls us to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. “Diversity,” “equity,” “inclusion” and “accessibility” are reflections of justice when it is fulfilled. Like many saints before us have said, justice is the form love takes in society.

The road is long, but we go forth in faith, trusting in the risen Christ and inspired by one another for the work ahead. Let us continue in the covenant God has made with us, to serve all people in love.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry', with a stylized, flowing script.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



SERVING TODAY

Worship Leader.....	Pastor Paul Tomkiel
Assisting Minister.....	Lauren Tingle
Musicians.....	Jacob Heller
Sacristan.....	Ann Reede
Reader.....	Jeff Muthler

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, Lenne 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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