

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

P. O. Box 267, 201 Veterans Dr., Columbus, TX 78934

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E-mail: [admin@splctx.org](mailto:admin@splctx.org) [www.splctx.com](http://www.splctx.com) **Pastor:** [pastor.akethan@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.akethan@gmail.com)

August 27, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost

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Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Congregational Chair			Donna Maas
St. Paul Christian Learning Academy Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			Tomasa Rosales
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** Love God, Love Neighbor (*Luke 10:27*)

**VISION STATEMENT:** We will work to strengthen and grow closer in relationship to God and to one another.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshipping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***
- *Hearing Assist devices are available for those who need assistance in hearing worship service better. Please see a person in the Sound Room (Usher Room) to request the use of a device during worship.*

\* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

**INTRODUCTION**

*In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their spiritual ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus declares that the church will be built on the rock of Peter's bold confession of faith. God's word of reconciliation and God's mercy are keys to the church's mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From the table we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.*

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE PADS**

*(Ushers will be handing out Attendance Pads during the announcements. Please be sure to sign your name and contact information.)*

**60 SECONDS OF STEWARDSHIP – Property Team**

\* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P We believe that the Bible contains instruction for us as followers of Jesus Christ to do what he asked of us. He taught the first disciples to help others to confess their sins and to proclaim to them the promise of forgiveness afterwards. So let us take a few brief moments in silence to open our hearts and minds to Jesus, to confess the things that weigh heavy on our hearts and the things we need help with so we might be more in line with what Jesus commands.

*(Silence for private confession.)*

P If you are truly sorry and asking God for help, here is the promise he commanded the leaders in his church to proclaim, "You are forgiven." May this forgiveness free you and help you to live; to live in Jesus' name.

**C Amen.**

**GOSPEL SONG: IN CHRIST ALONE**

**In Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song.  
This Cornerstone, this solid ground, firm thru the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease,  
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.**

**In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.  
The gift of love, and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save.  
'Til on that cross, as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied,  
For every sin on Him was laid. Here in the death of Christ, I live.**

**GOSPEL:** Matthew 16:13-20

*At a climactic point in Jesus' ministry, God reveals to Peter that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and Jesus responds with the promise of a church that will overcome the very gates of Hades.*

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20.

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others

Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” <sup>15</sup>He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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.” <sup>20</sup>Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

#### **GOSPEL SONG: IN CHRIST ALONE**

**There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain.  
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again.  
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me.  
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.**

**No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me.  
From life's first cry, to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from His hand  
'Til He returns, or calls me home, there in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.**

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#### **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

##### **SERMON**

**\* SERMON SONG: HOLY WATER (YOUR FORGIVENESS)**  
God, I'm on my knees again, God, I'm beggin' please again.  
I need You. Oh, I need You. Walking down these desert roads,  
Water for my thirsty soul. I need You. Oh, I need You.

##### **CHORUS:**

***Your forgiveness... is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!  
It's like the sound of a symphony to my ears!  
It's like holy water on my skin...***

**Dead man walkin', slave to sin. I wanna know about bein' born again,  
I need You. Oh, God, I need You.  
So take me to the river side, take me under, baptize!  
I need You. Oh, God, I need You. **CHORUS****

##### **BRIDGE x3**

**I don't wanna abuse Your grace. God, I need it every day!  
It's the only thing that ever really makes me wanna change.**

#### **LAST CHORUS**

**Your forgiveness... Oh, is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!  
It's like the sound of a symphony to my ears! It's like holy water  
Your forgiveness. . . Oh, is like sweet, sweet honey on my lips!  
It's like the sound of a symphony to my ears!  
Oh, it's like holy water on my skin...**

#### **TAG END:**

**Yeah, it's like holy water on my skin,  
Yeah, it's like holy water...**

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#### **\* APOSTLES' CREED**

- A** With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
- C** **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.**

*(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)*

#### **PRAYERS**

- A** Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.
- A brief silence.*
- A** Encourage those who offer their gifts and talents in service to your church. Energize this congregation's rostered and lay leaders, musicians, teachers, and administrators so they may be transformed in sharing your grace.
- A brief silence.*
- A** We pray for farmers and ranchers as they continue to work hard to bring us food in this time of drought. Bless them as they sow crops and care for livestock. Send us rain to heal the earth and water to quench Your thirsty land. Let faith be born from our doubts, hope from our despair, and compassion from our troubles.

*A brief silence.*

A We pray for peace in all the world, especially in war-torn areas of Ukraine, Sudan and Niger. Bring an end to wars and the destruction of lives and your creation.

*A brief silence.*

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Chris Schobel; Bill Orton; Ed Thraen; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

*A brief silence.*

A We pray for all those battling cancer that they may know comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Virginia Fritsch; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Carl Geisler; Laura Walla; Dorothy Wicke; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Michelle Thraen; Lydia Rojas; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; and Bob Loy.

A We pray for all expectant mothers that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Olivia Leyendecker; Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; and Kyndall Beettner.

A We pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)*  
Melvin Otto; Joey Denby; Edwin Oevermann; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; and Lauren Lamb.

A We pray for all law enforcement officers and especially for Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Zane Weido; Josh Jones; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neunendorff, as well as those active duty military members including Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; and Kevin Gonzalez that they are protected and kept safe.

*A brief silence.*

A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregations Cristo Rey and their leader Armando Capcha and Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad and their leaders Pastors Gumer and Naomi Anton in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

*A brief silence.*

A Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C Amen.**

**\* PEACE**

P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

***(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)***

**OFFERING and POWER OF ONE**

*"Power of One" is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These "Power of One" dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.*

**\* OFFERING PRAYER**

P Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

**\* REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS**

**\* LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to sing.

**C 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.**

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

\* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P All people are called to Christ's table. Come, eat what is good.

C Amen.

**DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION** (Continuous with Individual Cups)

*{Distribution will be continuous. All are welcome for communion. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor "Gluten-free, please." Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}*

\* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P We thank you, generous God, for the refreshment we have received at your banquet table.  
Send us now to spread your generosity into all the world, through the one who is our dearest treasure, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

\* **BLESSING**

P May you know God's love and that you are blessed. Now go and be a blessing to others.

C Amen.

\* **CLOSING SONG: MY FEET ARE ON THE ROCK!**

Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh  
I can see the clouds roll in. I can feel the winds, they try to shake me.  
I will not be moved. . . my feet are on the Rock!

I can feel the waters rise.  
I can hear the howling lies that haunt me.  
Fear won't hold me now. . . my feet are on the Rock!

**CHORUS:**

*When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.  
Let the waters come and the earth give way,  
I'll be dancing in the rain. . . my feet are on the Rock!  
Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh (2<sup>nd</sup> TIME TO BRIDGE)*

I can see the morning light. I can feel the joy on the horizon,  
Here my faith is found. . . I stand on solid ground. **CHORUS**

**BRIDGE [Sing 3 times]**

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand,  
So stomp your feet and clap your hands, our feet are on the Rock.

**LAST CHORUS**

When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.  
Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .  
When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.  
Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .  
My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,  
My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,  
My feet are on the Rock!

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\* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. You are blessed like Peter.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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**USHERS:** Kevin & Wendy Page; Ryan Thomas

**LAY READER:** Heather Thomas

**STREAMING:** Chase Brasher

**SOUND:** Sydney Eaton & Todd Jacobs

**ACOLYTE:** McKayla Kahlden

**POWER POINT:** Kay Wesson

**ALTAR GUILD:** Lora Kuenstler

**WELCOME:** Welcome to worship and a time of fellowship as the family of Christ. I invite you to greet those around you in the peace of the Lord.

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by Eugene & Chris Schobel in celebration of their August birthdays – Gene on August 10 and Chris on August 31.

**Dear Fellow Parishioners:** I want to **thank everyone** for all the delicious casseroles and vegetable dishes and, best of all, the scrumptious desserts you brought to the Farewell Send-off for Deacon Sandye and her husband Randy. Also, special thanks to my "Wonder Kitchen Crew"



that helped me. Everyone has made me feel so welcomed here. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! ♥ – Fay Ulbricht, Your Fellowship Team

**COLLECTION OF OFFERING:** Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes “Power of One” dollars.

**Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses:** \$8,405.00

**Attendance:** Aug. 19 & 20, 2023 – 191      **Contributions:** Aug. 19 & 20 – \$7,191.01  
**Power of One:** Aug. 19 & 20, 2023 – \$46.00      **Building Fund:** Aug. 19 & 20 – \$678.23

*Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.*

**Wednesday Night Attendance:** – Wed., Aug. 23 – **114 Total**  
**BLAST/Confirmation:** 86      **Support Staff:** 22

**ATTENTION:** Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.

► **Children's Activity Bags** are available for use by our young members and guests! You can find them on the coat hooks in the coat area of the narthex. After worship, **please place the used activity bags and their contents in the receptacle in the narthex.**

Thank you! ☺



**PRAYER LISTS:** As you know from recent church and bulletin announcements as well as the August newsletter, we asked for your help to update our prayer lists. As of August 15, our lists have been cut down considerably. If you would like to have someone added back to the lists, please contact the church office. You can stop by in person, call at 979-732-2423 or send an email to admin@splctx.org. Thank you!

◆ **God's Gals** will meet **tonight at 6:00 PM at Los Cabos** in Columbus for food, fellowship, and visiting!! All women of St. Paul Lutheran are invited. Bring a friend! Questions? Please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. ◆

● **Senior Explorers are Going Behind the Scenes!!** Come with us behind the scenes at Brookwood Community Center in Brookshire, Texas. The Brookwood Community provides an educational environment that creates meaningful work, builds a sense of belonging, and awakens genuine purpose in the lives of adults with disabilities. We will have a guided tour of the centers programs and finish the tour with a meal at the famous Brookwood Cafe. We will **depart** St. Paul Lutheran Church **Thursday, September 7, 2023 at 8:15 AM** to arrive in time for our tour at

9:15 AM. The tour will conclude with lunch starting at 11:00 AM. We will allow some time for shopping in the Brookwood store following lunch. We plan to return to the church by 2:00 PM. There is no cost for the tour. Please sign up in the narthex (foyer) by Sunday, September 3, 2023. If you have any questions, please call Kevin Page at 979-732-0845.

**Men In Mission:** Men In Mission is a group of men of all ages who meet each month in The Lighthouse. Breakfast is served, which typically includes conversations pertaining to sports, the arts, entertainment, etc.. We then have a short devotion, discussion, then close with the Lord's Prayer. If you are seeking a closer connection to the men of St. Paul, this is an excellent way to do so. You will make friends for life. Come join us on **Saturday, September 9, 2023 at 8:00 AM!**



**Colorado County Fair Concessions!!** The St. Paul Lutheran Youth and St. Paul Christian Learning Academy once again have been given the opportunity to take on the concession stand this year at the Colorado County Fair. This is such a beneficial fundraiser and a lot of fun working with everyone! We are excited to again be a part of this community event, however, it is a big task, and we will need your help. The carnival and rodeo will be **September 14, 15, & 16, 2023**, and we will cover all three days from **3:00 PM to 10:00 PM**. A shift and cooker schedule is posted in the narthex (foyer) as well as other ways you can volunteer to help with this fundraiser. If you are a good cook, cashier, organizer, supply runner or just have a heart for serving, we need you! All proceeds will go to support the St. Paul Lutheran youth programs and the St. Paul Christian Learning Academy. If you would like to know more or be a part of the planning team, please contact Stephanie Polasek at 979-732-1858.

♥♥ Our next **Marriage Course** will be every Sunday, **September 17-October 29, 2023**. On these Sunday nights from **6:00-8:00 PM** in the Lighthouse this seven-week course will take place. We realize that strong marriages make strong families, and strong families make strong communities. The Marriage Course is relevant for any couple wanting to invest in their relationship and make it stronger. Whether you have been married four months, 40 years or cohabitating and not married; you feel your marriage is fine, good, great, struggling or stuck; this course is for you. The course is more like a date night. There will be dinner and dessert mixed in with video presentations and discussion questions for you and your partner. You will not be asked to share anything about your relationship with anyone but your partner. **Cost is \$150** – this includes meals, workbooks and video materials. If you need childcare, the cost is an additional \$35 for the seven weeks. This course is limited to 11 couples. Sign up in the office or call Elena Monday-Friday during business hours to get your name on the list. When you sign up, please indicate if you will need childcare.

► **Volunteers Wanted!** If you are interested in helping with the Marriage Course (technical team; set-up/take down; server; etc.) please see the sign-up sheet in the narthex. Various opportunities are listed. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Alan.



**CONNECTED TO CHRIST:** It's the beginning of a new school year, and we need **names and addresses for all of our 2023 high school graduates and all others that are still in college!** Connected to Christ is a ministry of St. Paul that keeps our new graduates and college students connected to St. Paul with fun, Christian-based mailings four times a year. So students and/or family members, please send the name and address of your student to either Terri Brasher at (979)-732-1127, Stephanie Polasek at (979)-732-1858 or the church office. Thank you!



**Pictures Needed!!** I am in the process of changing all song backgrounds to royalty-free pictures for Power Point. Please send me any pictures of backgrounds (trees, rivers, oceans, mountains, etc.) you may have taken on your vacation. You can email them to [peggeisler@gmail.com](mailto:peggeisler@gmail.com). Thanks! – *Peggy Geisler*

♥ **Grief Support Group:** Are you experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of friend who has moved? The Grief Support Group is a place to share and discuss these issues with other individuals. The group meets the **third Thursday of each month from 5:30-6:30 PM in the church library.** For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

#### **SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

**Today (Aug. 27) –** 6:00 PM – God's Gals to Los Cabos, Columbus  
**Mon., Aug. 28 –** 9:00 AM-1:30 PM – Pastor Alan's Continuing Education  
**Tues., Aug. 29 –** 8:30 AM – Staff Meeting  
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)  
**Wed., Aug. 30 –** 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel  
5:00 PM – Meal  
5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & HS Youth  
**Fri., Sept. 1 –** 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)  
**Sat., Sept. 2 –** 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship  
**Next Sun., Sept. 3 –** 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship  
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation  
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship  
**Next Mon., Sept. 4 –** **Office Closed! (Labor Day)**

#### **UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

**Monday, August 28, 2023** **Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, died 430**  
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. Besides writing influential theological books, he served as bishop of Hippo, in present-day Algeria.

#### **Monday, August 28, 2023** **Moses the Black, monk, martyr, died around 400**

Converted from life as a thief and a robber to Christianity, Moses was an Ethiopian who became a desert monk at Skete. The change in his heart and life had a profound impact on his native country. He was murdered when Berber bandits attacked his monastery.

#### **Saturday, September 2, 2023** **Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, bishop, renewer of the church, died 1872**

Grundtvig was, with Søren Kierkegaard, one of the two great Danish theologians of the nineteenth century. As a pastor, he battled the prevalent idea that Christianity was more a philosophy than divine revelation. He wrote over a thousand hymns.  
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#### **OTHER READINGS:** Isaiah 51:1-6

*Just as God had called Abraham and Sarah and given them many descendants, so now God offers comfort to Zion. God's deliverance will come soon and will never end.*

The reading begins:

<sup>1</sup>Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>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.

#### **PSALM:** Psalm 138

<sup>1</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. <sup>2</sup>I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things. <sup>3</sup>When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. <sup>4</sup>All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD, when they have heard the words of your mouth. <sup>5</sup>They will sing of the ways of the LORD, that great is the glory of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar. <sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me. <sup>8</sup>You will

make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

**OTHER READINGS:** Romans 12:1-8

*In response to God's merciful activity, we are to worship by living holistic, God-pleasing lives. Our values and viewpoints are not molded by the time in which we live but are transformed by the Spirit's renewing work. God's grace empowers different forms of service among Christians, but all forms of ministry function to build up the body of Christ.*

The reading begins:

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

**SERVICE OVERVIEW: CONFESSING CHRIST, FORMED IN FAITH**

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.

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

Today, Peter receives the “keys of the kingdom.” In our baptism, we too have received those keys. God is opened to us, then we open ourselves to others. Welcome to worship! Join Peter to acclaim Jesus as Son of God. Be opened to the word and be opened at the table.

Peter’s confession comes in the middle of his journey of discipleship and is not a precondition for following Jesus. Our formation, too, is a lifelong process guided by those who travel before and

with us. Explore your own formation, identity, and vocation as a disciples of Jesus. In the first reading, Isaiah entreats us, “*Look to the rock from which you were hewn.*” Envisioning Peter “the rock,” consider how your faith is a “chip off the old block” of our forebears in faith.

Peter’s rock-solid faith can seem intimidating to those of us still wrestling with questions or living faithfully with our doubts. Rocks are often more pesky than helpful. What bedrock elements of faith are critical to you? To your community? What issues are now getting in the way of living and dying together in Christ and need to be moved?

Throughout our life we reflect on the people and experiences that have impacted our faith. These pieces have come together to make a strong foundation; they are root systems that were watered and nourished for the outgrowth of our own bold confessions of faith, just like Peter. Successes and lessons learned having brought us to where we are today resemble a garden with both growing seasons and dormant seasons. Our faith is built on the bold confessions of others who come into our lives for a variety of reasons and lengths of time. They are our gardeners; then we are sent to be gardeners for others.

The disciples have left behind everything they knew to follow a man who offered something different, something better. Now Jesus asks his disciples the hard question: “*But who do you say that I am?*” Almost every waking moment is filled with making choices. In a world where it seems like anything goes, we get to choose Jesus.

**KID STUDY:**

Today, the disciples are going "back to school" just like you did last week! Jesus, their teacher, taught them important lessons about the Kingdom of God. Jesus began his lesson that day by asking his disciples a question, “Who do you say that I am?” The disciples guessed that Jesus was John The Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets that spoke to the people about God. Then Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” Jesus said, “You are right, Peter. You didn’t learn that from listening to other people. It was taught to you by my Father in heaven.”

The lesson that the disciples learned that day is just as important today as it was then. Many people in our world today still do not know who Jesus is. You and I need to be ready with the answer that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*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.*]

**Next Week's Theme (Sept. 2 & 3):** Pick up your cross and follow me

**Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 2 & 3):**

**First Reading:** Jeremiah 15:15-21

*"God fortifies the prophet against opposition."*

**Psalm:** Psalm 26:1-8

*"Your love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you." (Ps. 26:3)*

**Second Reading:** Romans 12:9-21

*"Live in harmony."*

**Gospel:** Matthew 16:21-28

*"The passion prediction and rebuke to Peter."*

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*Excerpts from the poem "Dedicated Hearts":*

Dedicated hearts like yours  
Are not easy to find.  
It takes a special person to be  
So generous and kind.

To care so much for your fellow man  
Is a quality all too rare.  
Yet you give of your time and talents,  
For all in need to share. . . .

We want you to know how treasured you are. . .

To our precious St. Paul family,

Randy and I would like to say a *heartfelt thank you* to each one of you. We will be forever grateful for your support, your kindness, and your love. We cherish the many opportunities we have shared doing God's work using our hands. We have seen Christ in you, as together we continue to live into our mission to *Love God and Love Neighbor!*

**THANK YOU ALL!**

*Deacon Sandye and Randy Fletcher*

