

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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

PH# (979) 732-2423 Fax (979) 733-0489

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)

July 29 & 30, 2023

Ninth Sunday of Pentecost

\*\*\*\*\*

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
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
Organist			Carol Ripper

\*\*\*\*\*

**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 worshiping 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**

*As Solomon prays for wisdom, we seek to more deeply know the treasures of faith. In today's gospel Jesus offers everyday images that reveal to us the reign of God: a tree that becomes a sheltering home, yeast that penetrates and expands, a treasured pearl, a net that gains a great*

*catch. Even as we seek the riches of God's reign, the great surprise is that God's grace finds us first!*

**PRELUDE**

**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 – Fellowship Team**

\* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who greets us in this and every season, whose word never fails, whose promise is sure.

C **Amen.**

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of our neighbors, first privately then together publicly.

*Silence for reflection and private confession of personal sins, then join in with combined voices this printed confession.*

P Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

\* **HYMN ELW - #532 "Gather Us In"**

1. **Here in this place the new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness vanished away;  
see in this space our fears and our dreamings  
brought here to you in the light of this day.  
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken, gather us in, the blind and the lame;  
call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

2. **We are the young, our lives are a myst'ry,  
we are the old who yearn for your face;  
we have been sung throughout all of hist'ry,  
called to be light to the whole human race.  
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty, gather us in, the proud and the strong;  
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly, give us the courage to enter the song.**
3. **Here we will take the wine and the water,  
here we will take the bread of new birth,  
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,  
call us anew to be salt for the earth.  
Give us to drink the wine of compassion, give us to eat the bread that is you;  
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.**
4. **Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
not in some heaven, light years away –  
here in this place the new light is shining,  
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.  
Gather us in and hold us forever, gather us in and make us your own;  
gather us in, all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

Text: Marty Haugen Music: Marty Haugen Text and Music ©1982 GIA Publications, Inc.  
One License Song #00031 – Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-712109. All rights reserved.

\* **GREETING**

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

**C And also with you.**

\* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

**FIRST READING:** 1 Kings 3:5-12

A Our first reading is from 1 Kings, chapter 3, verses 5-12.

*Because Solomon did not ask for long life, riches, or the defeat of his enemies, God gave him what he asked for: wisdom to govern the people well.*

The reading begins:

<sup>5</sup>At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." <sup>6</sup>And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and

have given him a son to sit on his throne today. <sup>7</sup>And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup>And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup>Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" <sup>10</sup>It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. <sup>11</sup>God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, <sup>12</sup>I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you."

A The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM:** Psalm 119:129-136

A The Psalm today is from Psalm 119, verses 129-136. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

<sup>129</sup>Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all my heart.

**<sup>130</sup>When your word is opened it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.**

<sup>131</sup>I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

**<sup>132</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do to those who love your name.**

<sup>133</sup>Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me.

**<sup>134</sup>Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments.**

<sup>135</sup>Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes.

**<sup>136</sup>My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your teaching.**

**SECOND READING:** Romans 8:26-39

A Our second reading is from Romans, chapter 8, verses 26-39.

*These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.*

The reading begins:

<sup>26</sup>The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. <sup>31</sup>What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised,

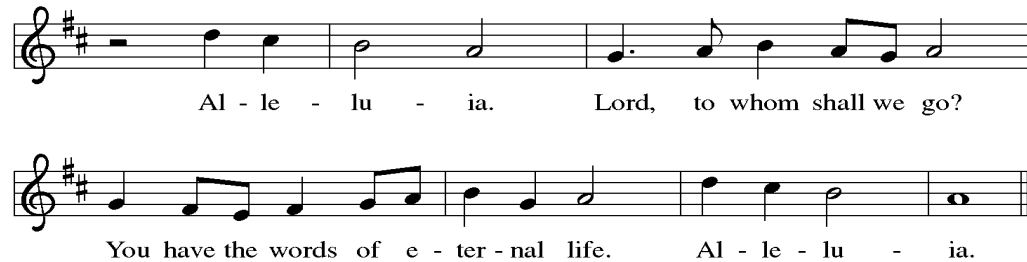
who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. <sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A The word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

A Please stand as you are comfortable for the gospel.

\* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)



\* **GOSPEL:** Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

*Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.*

P The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 13, verses 31-33 and 44-52.

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

<sup>31</sup>[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; <sup>32</sup>it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." <sup>33</sup>He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." <sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. <sup>45</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; <sup>46</sup>on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. <sup>47</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; <sup>48</sup>when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put

the good into baskets but threw out the bad. <sup>49</sup>So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous <sup>50</sup>and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." <sup>52</sup>And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

P The gospel of the Lord.

**C Praise to you, O Christ.**

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

### SERMON

\* **HYMN ELW - #793 "Be Thou My Vision"**

1. **Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:  
thou my best thought both by day and by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**
2. **Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,  
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.**
3. **Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.**
4. **Light of my soul, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

CCLI Song #30639 Words: Irish, 8<sup>th</sup> cent; vers. Eleanor Henrietta Hull, alt; tr. Mary Elizabeth Byrne  
Music: Irish traditional ©Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729371

### OPPORTUNITY FOR HEALING:

*Those who wish may come down the center aisle to the altar rail to receive the laying on of hands, prayer, and anointing with oil. Please respond by saying, "Amen" after the prayer. Please return to your seats by the side aisle.*

**While those who wish are coming forward for anointing and prayers, we will sing the following hymns:**

▪ **ELW - #617 “We Come to You for Healing, Lord”**

1. **We come to you for healing, Lord, of body, mind, and soul, and pray that by your Spirit's touch we may again be whole.**
2. **As once you walked through ancient streets and reached toward those in pain, come, risen Christ, among us still with pow'r to heal again.**
3. **You touch us through physician's skills, through nurses' gifts of care, and through the love of faithful friends who lift our lives in prayer.**
4. **When nights are long with wakefulness, through days when strength runs low, grant us your gift of patience, Lord, your calming peace to know.**
5. **We come to you, O loving Lord, in our distress and pain, in trust that through our nights and days, your grace will heal, sustain.**

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr. Music: Hugh Wilson Text ©2002 GIA Publications, Inc.

▪ **ELW - #614 “There Is a Balm in Gilead”**

**REFRAIN:**

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;  
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

1. **Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. REFRAIN**
2. **If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus and say, “He died for all.” REFRAIN**
3. **Don't ever be discouraged, for Jesus is your friend; and if you lack for knowledge, he'll ne'er refuse to lend. REFRAIN**

CCLI Song #234002 Text: African American spiritual Music: African American spiritual ©Text: Public Domain Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729377

▪ **ELW - #656 “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”**

1. **Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the unity of heart and mind is like to that above.**
2. **Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers; our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.**
3. **We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.**

4. **From sorrow, toil, and pain, and sin we shall be free; and perfect love and friendship reign through all eternity.**

CCLI Song #25369 Words: John Fawcett Music: Johann Hans Georg Nägeli © Words: Public Domain Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729377

**PRAYER AFTER HEALING**

- P Let us pray,  
Living God, through the laying on of hands and anointing, grant comfort in suffering to all who are in need of healing. When they are afraid, give them courage; when afflicted, give them patience; when dejected, give them hope; and when alone, assure them of the support of your holy people. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

\* **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 OF INTERCESSION**

- 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 Compassionate God, we pray for the nations. Instill in all who govern the ability to discern between good and evil, free those who are oppressed, and protect those facing danger. Promote peace across the world and in our towns and neighborhoods and especially in Ukraine and Sudan. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

- A Heavenly God, we pray for the family and friends of Trent Hagen who passed away this past week. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A Healing God, we pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Carl Geisler; Verna Nell Dittmar; Edna Supak; Kathy Hageman; Michelle Thraen; Kaci Luedke; James Brod; Ronnie Huebel; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Loving God, we pray for those battling cancer, all expectant mothers, those who reside in care facilities and the homebound, all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers, and active duty military personnel. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.** {See all those we pray for on pages 13 & 14.}

A God of mission, 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 Iglesia Cristiana Camino de Santidad 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. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

P 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 The peace of the risen Lord be with you always.

**C And also with you.** (*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.*

\* **OFFERTORY** (*Sung*)



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

\* **OFFERING PRAYER**

P God of field and forest, sea and sky, you are the giver of all good things. Sustain us with these gifts of your creation, and multiply your graciousness in us with what we give back to your work, that the world may be fed with your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C Amen.**

\* **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

\* **LORD'S PRAYER**

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

**C 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**

P All people are called to Christ's table. Come and experience the kingdom.

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.}*

\* **BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**

P Now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

\* **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 The God who calls across the cosmos and speaks in the smallest seed † bless, keep, and sustain you now and to the end of the age.

C Amen.

\* **HYMN ELW - #705 "God of Grace and God of Glory"**

1. **God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your pow'r:  
crown your ancient church's story; bring its bud to glorious flow'r.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour,  
for the facing of this hour.**
2. **Lo! The hosts of evil round us scorn the Christ, assail his ways!  
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days,  
for the living of these days.**

3. **Cure your children's warring madness; bend our pride to your control;  
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss your kingdom's goal,  
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.**

4. **Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;  
let the gift of your salvation be our glory evermore.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore,  
serving you whom we adore.**

One License #97297 Words: Harry E. Fosdick Music: John Hughes

©Words: Public Domain | ©Music: Public Domain

Reprinted with permission under One License #A-712109. All rights reserved.

\* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. You are God's treasure.

C **Thanks be to God, and we will.**

**POSTLUDE**

From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006327.

New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Revised Common Lectionary, Copyright © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts, admin Augsburg Fortress.

Used by permission.

**USHERS: SAT:** Kenny & JoAnn Venghaus; Janeen Venghaus; Emily Frank

**SUN:** Curtiss Schonenberg; DyAnn Lauzon; Marilyn Yearwood

**LAY READERS: SAT:** JoAnn Venghaus

**SUN:** David Johnson

**ACOLYTE:**

**SUN:** Paisley Stancik

**STREAMING:**

**SUN:** Tiffany Lauzon

**SOUND:**

**SUN:** Todd Jacobs

**ALTAR GUILD:** Janeen Venghaus and Sandye Fletcher

**WELCOME:** "[Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39, NIV). What better reason to worship together! Welcome to St. Paul.

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by Keith & Loraine Gast in honor and celebration of their daughter Bailey's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday on July 31.

We extend our Christian sympathy to the family and friends of Trent Hagen who passed away this past week. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

**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:** July 22 & 23, 2023 – 150  
**Power of One:** July 22 & 23, 2023 – \$49.45

**Contributions:** July 22 & 23 – \$6,115.01  
**Building Fund:** July 22 & 23 – \$138.23

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

**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.*

**KEEP IN OUR PRAYERS: Those Battling Cancer:** Elizabeth Frisby; John Gibson; Dorothy Wicke; Pam Parker; Debbie Herzik; Randy Wendt; Susan Chandler; Heather Deviney; Jaime Sawyer; Kim Moerbe Welack; Misti Retzer; Zelda Lanford; Michelle Thraen; Pauline Gosnell; Nina Naumann; GayLynn Willms Burk; Carl Norton; Laura Harris; Todd Foster; Cindy Tanner; Joe Reck; Melinda Rodiek; Melda Coleman; Donna Culton; Nancy Hartmann; Lydia Rojas; Larry Stolar; Vivian Fortenberry; Rick Davis; Darryl Stancik; Jerry Ordner; Michael Yancey; Al Gene Canik; Jane Venghaus Taylor; George Wright; Sandy Mosley; Charlene Tesch; Karen Bailiff; Julian Divin; Nancy Biers; Pam Potter; Charlie Hammock; Brad Bryson; Lynette Frnka; Riana Jamison; Jenna Escamilla; Margaret Ortiz; Jodi Sebesta; Paul Casinger; DeQuincy Lister; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Doug Mason; Dr. Tom Hancher; Joe Berry; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Megan Burch; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Jessica Mauchlen; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Stanley King; Dawn Foster; Edward Halcolm; Amber Smith Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; Brenda Baker.

**Expectant Mothers:** Dina Anton de Espinoza; Olivia Leyendecker; Daya Latiolais; Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner.

**Those in Care Facilities and Homebound:** Joey Denby; Edwin Oevermann; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Doug Hill; Robert Saunders; Coy Dell Schindler; Barbara McMath; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher. **Homebound:** Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmner; Donna Dehmer; Rita Noska; Cherie Moore.

**Those Law Enforcement Officers:** Charles Jobb; Joseph Smith; Todd Jacobs; Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Nancy Gorman; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Bruno Flores; Zane Weido; Josh Jones. **Fire Fighters, First Responders, Healthcare Workers and 9-1-1 Dispatchers:** Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Donnie Templeton; Jason Templeton; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Randy Wendt; Travis Neuendorff; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neuendorff. **Active Duty Military:** Brian Anderson; Michael Graham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana

Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; William Phillips; Kevin Gonzalez; Cody Goolsby; Reese Neisner.

► **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! ☺

\*\* **God's Gals:** God's Gals are going on a field trip!! On **Sunday, July 30, 2023** we will go to **Joe's Place in Fayetteville** for lunch, fellowship and fun! We will **leave the church parking lot at 12:30 PM** for those that need a ride. Please sign up in the narthex (foyer) by Sunday, July 30, 2023 so I can get a head count for the van and for Joe's! Questions?

Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127. \*\*

► **1<sup>st</sup> Grade Creation Day!** Students entering 1<sup>st</sup> grade are invited to cool off in the Lighthouse for a day to create on **Sunday, August 6, 2023** from **12:15-2:15 PM**. Students will have time to create and play together as we talk about how we are created to be Salt & Light to the earth. Pizza will be served for lunch. Please RSVP to Stephanie (979-732-1858) by Friday, August 4, 2023.

**Men In Mission:** Men In Mission is a group of men of all ages who meet at **7:00 AM** on the first Saturday of each month in The Lighthouse. Breakfast is served, which typically includes conversations pertaining to sports, the arts, entertainment, and occasionally politics. We then have a short devotion, discussion, then close with the Lord's Prayer around 8:00 AM. 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, August 5!**

 **Attention Graduating Seniors and Current College Students:** This is a reminder that if you are planning to or are currently pursuing a degree in education *or* nursing, you are encouraged to apply for the Frank & Ann Derr Scholarship here at St. Paul. For an application, please see Ms. Stephanie or stop by the church office. Complete your application and return it to the church office **as soon as possible.**

♣ **Day Camp at Lutherhill!** Youth completing K-5th grade are invited to experience a week at camp without the over-night stay during the week of **July 30-August 4, 2023**. Camp starts each day at 8:00 AM and will end at 5:15 PM. Stephanie Polasek will shuttle youth each day to and from camp. We will leave the church at 7:20 AM and will return at 5:50 PM. Contact Stephanie at 979-732-1858 for transportation. It's always a great time for the kiddos!

♦ **Blessing of the Backpacks:** We are sending our students and educators back to school with our prayers and blessings on **Saturday, August 12 and Sunday, August 13, 2023 at each**

**worship service.** All students from pre-school through college are invited to bring their backpacks to worship and join us for this special time of blessing. All educators are encouraged to attend worship and join us in prayer for the new school year. The Youth & Education Team will also be presenting each student entering 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (and have not received a bible) with a student Spark Bible and students beginning confirmation with a Here We Stand Study Bible and Student Book. Please join us on this weekend at worship to send each student and teacher into the school year with the support of our church family.

**\*\* Please join us for a farewell pot luck honoring Deacon Sandye Fletcher and her husband Randy on Sunday, August 13, 2023 in the Lighthouse following the 11:05 AM service. \*\***



**A Trip to the Ball Game**  
**ST. PAUL SENIOR EXPLORERS ARE GOING TO THE ASTROS!** The Astros will be playing the Boston Red Sox on **Thursday, August 24, 2023.** Game time is 1:10 PM. We will **depart St. Paul at 10:00 AM**, stop and eat brunch at Cracker Barrel, and arrive comfortably at Minute Maid Park before game time. The grey area is that we think we can get pretty good tickets for \$30-\$50, depending on how many are going and the Astros' performance. We will call everyone before buying tickets if they are going to cost more than that. Please sign up in the narthex (foyer) by Sunday, August 13, 2023. Call Kevin Page with any questions at 979-732-0845.



**PRAYER LIST UPDATES:** We are asking you to help us update our prayer lists that are found in our weekly bulletins (cancer; care facilities; military; etc.). In the past we have discovered that we have continued to pray for someone who was deceased for some time, someone who had not been in the military for a long time, etc.. Look over the lists carefully. **Please notify the office by Tuesday, August 15, 2023 of the people you want to remain on the lists.** You can stop by the office in person, call at 979-732-2423 or send an email to [admin@splctx.org](mailto:admin@splctx.org). Thank you for helping us to update our lists!!



**Acolyte Training:** Becoming an acolyte is a wonderful way to serve God and your church. Being an acolyte is open for youth entering the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and older, able to reach the altar, able to pay attention to the flow of service and capable of assisting with communion trays. Acolyte training will be held **Sunday, August 20, 2023 at 10:00 AM in the sanctuary.** *Parents, please plan to attend this training with your child so you may be able to help if there are questions later on.* Please text or email Stephanie to let her know you will be attending. If your child is interested in becoming an acolyte but cannot make it to this training, please contact Stephanie at 979-732-1858 or [stephaniepolasek@yahoo.com](mailto:stephaniepolasek@yahoo.com).

♥♥ 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.



**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 take or 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:**

**Mon., July 31 –** 7:50 AM-5:50 PM – Day Camp at Lutherhill, La Grange  
9:30 AM – Staff Meeting

**Tues., Aug. 1 –** 7:50 AM-5:50 PM – Day Camp at Lutherhill, La Grange  
9:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Deanery  
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)  
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)  
6:30-8:00 PM – The Gathering

**Wed., Aug. 2 –** 7:50 AM-5:50 PM – Day Camp at Lutherhill, La Grange  
9:00 AM – CLA Chapel



**Thurs., Aug. 3 –** 7:50 AM-5:50 PM – Day Camp at Lutherhill, La Grange  
 10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to The Oaks  
 5:30 PM – Youth & Education Team (library)  
 6:00 PM – Property Team (choir room)  
 6:30 PM – Pastor Alan's Mutual Ministry Team

**Fri., Aug. 4 –** 7:50 AM-5:50 PM – Day Camp at Lutherhill, La Grange  
 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)

**Sat., Aug. 5 –** 7:00 AM – Men In Mission (Lighthouse)  
 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

**Next Sun., Aug. 6 –** 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship  
 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School  
 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship  
 12:15-2:15 PM – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Creation Day (Lighthouse)

**SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE...**

A string of parables describe the kingdom of heaven, and then we hear Jesus' question: "Have you understood all this?" The mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, pearls - these bring good news of growth and joy and riches. Then come the fish, the furnace of fire, and the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Once again this week we hear of a God of both mercy and justice. Once again there is good news to be heard in Paul's letter to the church at Rome - *nothing will ever separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus*. How will we reconcile these two images of God?

**THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

The gospel reading today includes six very brief parables about things described as "the kingdom of heaven." Which picture of the mercy of God is most appealing to you? As we move from the word to the table for the Lord's Supper, take this treasure into yourself.

Kingdoms are not common in our world. For most of us, we recall images of British royalty, jeweled crowns, and palaces. At the time the Gospel of Matthew was written, the people were subject to the empire (kingdom) of Rome. Perhaps the writer intended to contrast the oppressive rule of Rome with a vision of heaven's kingdom of love and mercy.

Many people hear the term kingdom of heaven and immediately think of an alternate realm in the afterlife. We should understand the heaven described in scripture as an inbreaking of God's dominion of love and freedom that impacts our lives here and now. Believers are called to respond to the good news of the kingdom of heaven's arrival by engaging in the world's needs, rather than passively awaiting a heavenly afterlife.

Why does Jesus so often use parables as a teaching tool? Jesus makes surprising comparisons between holy things and ordinary things, breaking open our everyday understanding and inviting us to explore them. The ordinary things Jesus uses to describe God's kingdom all have an aspect of hiddenness to them, so the kingdom is something we must search for ourselves. Jesus' parables about treasure prompt reflection on how we find and measure things of real worth. Peace and contentment carry more value than even the most precious material

objects. Today's parables are all about small things that turn into something big to remind us that even a small seed, a small action, can make a huge impact.

**KID STUDY:**

Some stories begin with "Once upon a time..." Jesus' stories often began with "The kingdom of God is like..." One of today's stories describes a woman making bread. Have you ever baked fresh bread? You have to have yeast to bake bread. Yeast is a living organism. It is "activated" when it is given food (sugar) and water. When that happens, we can sit back and watch it come to life! As the yeast eat the sugar, they give off gas. This is what makes bread rise and become fluffy! The tiny speck of yeast has now changed and grown and helped the bread dough expand. In the same way, this is what happens when we share God's love with those around us. It grows and becomes bigger and bigger.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." In a single sentence several ancient stories are evoked, and yet, by the introduction of a few new terms the traditional sense of these stories is radically transformed. Three measures of flour is an ephah, somewhere around a bushel. That is a lot of flour. It is three measures or an ephah that Abraham causes to be prepared for the angels of God at Mamre. In the new temple that is imagined and described by the prophet Ezekiel, the grain offerings will be an ephah of flour baked by the priests apart from the people. Yet the one who welcomes the outsiders to table says this: the dominion of God is like leavened holy bread baked by a woman. No wonder the leaven is hid. All the meal - enough for Abraham, enough for the new temple, enough for meeting God - is leavened, to be feast for all who long to meet with God in the same way that Jesus' unclean death is made to be such a feast. This dominion of God, then, is not what had been expected: it comes with a radical grace to the outsiders and the sinners. - Gordon Lathrop [Gordon W. Lathrop, Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 24-25.]*

+++++

**Next Week's Theme (Aug. 5 & 6):** Feeding the 5,000+

**Next Week's Scriptures (Aug. 5 & 6):**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 55:1-5  
*"Eat and drink that which truly satisfies."*

**Psalm:** Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21  
*"You open wide your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Ps. 145:16)*

**Second Reading:** Romans 9:1-5  
*"The glory of God's people Israel."*

**Gospel:** Matthew 14:13-21  
*"Christ feeding five thousand."*