

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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November 19, 2023 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

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

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

Our readings during November speak of the end times. Zephaniah proclaims that the coming day of the LORD will be filled with wrath and distress. Paul says it will come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather around signs of hope — word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the good news of Christ’s coming among us.

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.)

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P Lord, we confess that we often have refused the gift of your Spirit. Content in our dimness we shrink from your Light. Comfortable in our coolness we withdraw from your Fire. We would be moved – but carefully. We would feel – but mildly. We would see your face – but dimly. Forgive us for begrudging the coming of your Spirit, or for accepting your fire, only to smother it selfishly. Forgive us, and visit us again. We pray, now, in Jesus' name, not for warm thoughts, but for burning hearts. For there is much that we must see, and much that we must do. Amen.

(Silence for private confession.)

P “Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live.” (Isaiah 40:1-2; Amos 5:12)

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.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 25, verses 14-30.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁴“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed

over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?' ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

GOSPEL SONG: IN CHRIST ALONE

**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.**

**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: WHO YOU SAY I AM**

**Who am I that the highest King would welcome me?
I was lost, but He brought me in. Oh, His love for me. Oh, His love for me. . .**

CHORUS 1

***Who the Son sets free; oh, is free indeed!
I'm a child of God, yes I am!***

**Free at last, He has ransomed me. His grace runs deep.
While I was a slave to sin Jesus died for me. Yes, He died for me. . .**

CHORUS 2

***Who the Son sets free; oh, is free indeed!
I'm a child of God, yes I am!
In my Father's house there's a place for me;
I'm a child of God, yes I am!***

BRIDGE

**I am chosen, not forsaken – I am who you say I am!
You are for me, not against me – I am who You say I am!
I am chosen, not forsaken – I am who you say I am!
You are for me, not against me – I am who You say I am!
Oh, I am who You say I am! Yes, I am who You say I am!**

CHORUS 2

***Who the Son sets free; oh, is free indeed!
I'm a child of God, yes I am!
In my Father's house there's a place for me;
I'm a child of God, yes I am!***

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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 Let us turn our hearts to God, our breath and life, as we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A Gracious God, you give talents and gifts to all your people, and you equip the church to serve. Turn us from fear and self-serving ways, that we use our talents to glorify you and encourage our neighbor.

A brief silence.

A You have been our dwelling place from one generation to another. Sustain the life of the planet; protect farmlands and harvests. Direct all people in wise stewardship of all the earth's resources.

A brief silence.

A You call us to honesty and integrity. Instill these values in the hearts of all nations and their leaders. Free any who are oppressed, expose all corruption, and bring redemption to victims of injustice.

A brief silence.

A We pray for the faith formation ministries of our church. Give to all children, youth, and adults who study your word the breastplate of faith and love. Shape us by your love and show us how to encourage one another.

A brief silence.

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

A brief silence.

A We pray for the family and friends of Sylvia Teykl who passed away recently. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

A We give you thanks and praise for the birth of Sophie Paige Stancik to Lance and Camille Stancik. Bless their family as they begin a new life together.

A brief silence.

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Angela Skow; Ericka Lopez; Dodie Dungen; Joyce Dehmer; Nita Renik; Robert Hudec; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

A 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.

{See all those we pray for on pages 9 & 10.}

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 Pastor 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 We offer our spoken prayers and those held in our hearts trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

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 God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant.

C Amen.

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

* **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 There is a place for you at the banquet. Come and feast at Jesus' table.

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 Lord Jesus, in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God, Sovereign, ☩ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always.

C Amen.

* **CLOSING SONG: SING WHEREVER I GO**

CHORUS *All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.*

**God is for me, He's not against me. I will hold to the plans He has for me.
When I am broken, He will fix me. I will call on the name of the Lord.**

CHORUS *All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.*

**He's my heartsong in my sorrow. He's my hope and my strength for tomorrow.
When the storms rise all around me, I will call on the name of the Lord.**

CHORUS *All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.*

**I got joy, joy, joy. . . deep in my soul!
I will sing, sing, sing. . . wherever I go!**

CHORUS *All my life, all I know, God's been good, good to my soul.
Mountain high, valley low, I'm gonna sing wherever I go.
I'm gonna sing wherever I go.*

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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace: We have been abundantly blessed to bless others.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Kevin & Wendy Page; Ryan Thomas

LAY READER: Lora Kunestler

STREAMING: Kay Wesson

SOUND: Sydney Eaton and Todd Jacobs

ACOLYTE: Elliot Polasek

POWER POINT: Peggy Geisler

ALTAR GUILD: Amanda Oppermann

WELCOME: Psalm 90 proclaims: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations" (v. 1, NRSV). May children, youth and adults all feel at home in this, Christ's church. Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Eugene & Chris Schobel in celebration of their 14th wedding anniversary on November 21.

We extend our Christian sympathy to the Bethany Guthmann and family for the loss of her aunt Sylvia Teykl who passed away recently. May God comfort them during their time of loss.

Congratulations! Lance and Camille Stancik are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter **Sophie Paige Stancik**. Sophie Paige was born Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 11:46 PM in Austin, Texas. She weighed 6 lbs. and was 19 3/8 inches long. Welcoming her home are big sister Paisley, big brother Tucker, and big sister Landry. Proud grandparents are David and Janis Stancik, and proud great-grandmother is Bernice Stancik.

Thank you for all the cards, phone calls and texts during my recent illness. It was very concerning for a bit, but I'm doing great now and so appreciate your thoughts and prayers. It was a great comfort. – *Becky Collins*

Thank you to my family and my church family and friends for all your prayers, phone calls, cards, visits and food and to Meals to Heal for the delicious meals while I was taking radiation treatments. I rang the bell and am so thankful. May God bless all of you. – *Virginia Fritsch*

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: November 11 & 12, 2023 – 234

Power of One: November 11&12, 2023 – \$47.00

Contributions: Nov. 11 & 12 – \$9,759.41

Building Fund: Nov. 11 & 12 – \$1,900.02

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

Wednesday Night Attendance: – Wed., Nov. 8 – **108 Total**

BLAST/Confirmation: 89

Support Staff: 19

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: Kristen Downing; Ashley Roberts; Traci Edman; Michael Yancey; Amanda Aramijo; Zachary Schulke; Herbie Kollatschny; Darrell Pagel; Tom Russell, Jr.; Melda Coleman; Al Gene Canik; Larry Bookout; Mike Wostarek; Elizabeth Frisby; Virginia Fritsch; Kristina Acevedo; George Krenek; Anne Dimas; Carl Geisler; Laura Walla; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; Bob Loy.

Expectant Mothers: Nancy Gorman; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert; Kristen O'Leary Bridges; Abigail Gatzke; Chelsea Gilstrap; Calli Guthmann.

Those in Care Facilities and Homebound: Joey Denby; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Walter Glaeser, Jr.. **Homebound:** Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; Lauren Lamb; Lydia Rojas.

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; 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.; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Travis Neuendorff; Nathan Bookout; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette; and Terri Neuendorff. **Active Duty Military:** Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Dalton Kapel; Kevin Gonzalez; Evelyn Rojas; Nelson Beettner.

► **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! ☺



Community Thanksgiving Worship Service will be held here at **St. Paul Lutheran Church at 6:00 PM this evening**. We don't have a lot of opportunities to join in worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with other churches in Columbus, however, this event encourages us to show the community that we Christians can worship together.

THANKSGIVING EVE & PIE FEST: It is that time of year again. Yahoo! Thanksgiving Eve Worship and the awesome Pie Fest that follows! Our festive **worship** will begin at **7:00 PM on Wednesday, November 22, 2023**. We will then move to the Lighthouse afterwards to enjoy fellowship around a variety of pies. Join us in fellowship and thanksgiving of our many blessings and appreciate the creativity of our members and their baking skills as we begin our Thanksgiving weekend.



Mark your calendars! God's Gals will **decorate the church for Christmas after the 11:05 AM service on Sunday, November 26, 2023**. We need muscles, too, so guys are invited to come help us! Thanks in advance for your help! Questions? Contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.

▪ **ADVENT RETREAT AT LUTHERHILL:** Christmas is coming! Let's get ready. Advent is the sacred time in our church year that helps us prepare for Jesus to be born into our world, again. It's a time of holy anticipation and preparation. At this mini-retreat for **1st-6th grade students** held **December 1 & 2, 2023**, campers gather for an action-packed 24 hours at the Hill in La Grange, Texas. We'll

get ready for Christmas as we explore the story of Jesus' birth and prepare space in our lives and our hearts for Jesus to come. Stephanie will be taking a group and staying at this retreat. If your student would like to attend, please contact Stephanie Polasek and register your child at lutherhill.org; click on Advent Retreat. **Cost is \$60 per student.** If you have any questions, contact Stephanie at 979-732-1858.

++ FAMILY ADVENT READINGS: Families are encouraged to sign up for the **Family Advent Litany Reading and Candle Lighting** that will take place at the beginning of services during Advent. A family will come forward to read the Litany and light the candle for that particular Sunday in Advent. **This will begin the first weekend of Advent, December 2 & 3, 2023.** If your family is interested, **please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the narthex.** A different family is needed for each service. **The dates and times are:** Sat., Dec. 2 at 7:00 PM; Sun., Dec. 3 at 9:00 AM; Sun., Dec. 3 at 11:05 AM; Sat., Dec. 9 at 7:00 PM; Sun., Dec. 10 at 9:00 AM; Sun., Dec. 10 at 11:05 AM; Sat., Dec. 16 at 7:00 PM; Sun., Dec. 17 at 9:00 AM; Sun., Dec. 17 at 11:05 AM; and Sun. Dec. 24 at 10:00 AM. A copy of the reading will be sent to you.



Please donate blood at our last blood drive of 2023. During the holidays, the demand for blood increases. **St. Paul's blood drive is Sunday, December 3, 2023 from 8:00 AM-12:30 PM in the Lighthouse.** All donors get a free gift! Sign up with the QR code on the poster or go to https://www.commitforlife.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/353849. When signing up, please use **sponsor code P732.** You may also contact Melinda Zajicek at 979-820-8793, and she will get you signed up. *If you are interested in helping with this event, please let Melinda know.*

ST. PAUL QUILTERS: The St. Paul Quilters will be taking a brief fall & winter break as a group to relax and rejuvenate for next year. **They will be taking off all of November and December and resume quilting as a group Tuesday, January 9, 2024.** The quilters meet the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month in the Lighthouse. If anyone is interested in getting fabric to cut blocks at home or to sew quilt tops at home during that time, please contact Carol Lighthill at 832-371-3308. She will be happy to meet you and get you the fabric you need.

• **Women of JOY Bible Study:** The Women of JOY Bible Study group meets on Mondays to cook and have interesting Bible study and discussions. The **first Monday** of the month we **meet in the Lighthouse to cook** for BLAST. The **2nd and 4th Mondays** of the month we meet in the **high school room (old choir room) for Bible Study.** We are currently reading The Story. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Gerri Hackfeld at 979-732-4711.

♥ **Grief Support Group:** The Grief Support Group is for anyone who has lost a loved one, either recently or a few years ago. We share and support each other. Come join us and get support from others walking this journey. We meet at **5:30 PM** in the youth room (formerly the choir

room) the **third Thursday of the month.** **NOTE:** You do not have to share or talk until you are ready! If you have questions, please contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Today (Nov. 19) – 6:00 PM – Community Thanksgiving Worship (sanctuary)
Mon., Nov. 20 – 9:00 AM – Staff Meeting
1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to TLC
6:00 PM – Church Council
Tues., Nov. 21 – 10:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks
12:00 PM – Noon Bible Study (library)
5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)
Wed., Nov. 22 – 10:00 AM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks
2:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor Alan to The Oaks
No Meal or BLAST this week!
7:00 PM – Thanksgiving Eve Worship (sanctuary)
8:00 PM – Pie Fest (Lighthouse)
Nov. 23 & 24 – Office Closed! (Happy Thanksgiving!)
Sat., Nov. 25 – The Gathering to Top Golf, Houston
7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., Nov. 26 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
12:00 PM – God's Gals & Guys Decorate Church

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Thursday, November 23, 2023 Clement, Bishop of Rome, died around 100
Clement was the third bishop of Rome. He is best remembered for a letter he wrote to the congregation in Corinth, still struggling with the same problems that led to Paul's letters to them. As did Paul, he focused on the need for love among Christians.

Thursday, November 23, 2023 Miguel Agustín Pro, martyr, died 1927
Pro grew up in a time when the Mexican revolutionaries accused the church of siding with the wealthy. He became a Jesuit priest, and worked on behalf of the poor and homeless. Falsely accused of throwing a bomb at a government official, he was executed, but not before crying out "Long live Christ the King!"

Friday, November 24, 2023 Justus Falckner, died 1723; Jehu Jones, died 1852; William Passavant, died 1894; pastors in North America

Not only was Falckner the first Lutheran ordained in North America, but he published a catechism which was the first Lutheran book published on the continent. Jones was the Lutheran church's first African American pastor and carried out missionary work in Philadelphia which led to the formation there of the first African American Lutheran congregation (St. Paul's). William Passavant helped to establish hospitals and orphanages in a number of cities and was the first to introduce deaconesses to the work of hospitals in the United States.

Saturday, November 25, 2023 Isaac Watts, hymnwriter, died 1748

Thought by many to be the greatest hymnwriter in the English language, Watts as a youth was critical of the quality of the metrical psalter of the time. He wrote about 600 hymns—many based on the psalms, but others that are not.

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OTHER READINGS: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the LORD as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the LORD.

The reading begins:

⁷Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. ¹²At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm." ¹³Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them. ¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. ¹⁵That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. ¹⁷I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

PSALM: Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12

¹Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another. ²Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God. ³You turn us back to the dust and say, "Turn back, O children of earth." ⁴For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night; ⁵you sweep them away like a dream, they fade away suddenly like the grass: ⁶in the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered. ⁷For we are consumed by your anger; we are afraid because of your wrath. ⁸Our iniquities you have set before you, and our secret sins in the light of your countenance. [⁹When you are angry, all our days are gone; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. ¹⁰The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty; yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and we are gone. ¹¹Who regards the power of your wrath? Who rightly fears your indignation?] ¹²So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

OTHER READINGS: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reading begins:

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: AWAKE TO THE GRACE OF GOD

Jesus' parable of the talents invites a full-hearted response to God's lavish gifts of faith and purpose. We as people of God are meant to be engaged, alert, and ready to share what we have received from our prodigally (wastefully) generous God. While this parable is sometimes interpreted in the context of judgment, read it carefully. Do you see the beauty of the faith-generated response to God's lavish grace?

That is the definition of stewardship! Presented in light of God's gift of faith and purpose, this "churchy" term can today be transformed to new understanding in the proclamation of the gospel text. Instead of the weight of obligation and duty we so often associate with religion, we are invited today to another way – to be fully awake to the grace of God.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today's parable about the talents asks us to contemplate why some people do a good job of using their talents to benefit others and some never employ their talents to the full. Welcome to worship! Hear God's call to righteous living. Receive the salvation that God wills for you. Come to the table and be strengthened to become an ever more creative, faithful servant in God's kingdom.

What does it mean to be awake to the grace of God? On the surface Jesus' parable is a simple premise: the contrast of workers who please and workers who disappoint their master. Money in the parable, called a "talent" is contrasted with our English word "talent" meaning a person's natural ability. A common use of this parable is to stress what Lutherans call *law*: we are obligated to use our talents to the best of our ability. The parable also proclaims what Lutherans

call *gospel*: all good comes from God, who provides us far more than we need. God's grace is given in abundance for our use.

God has been the dwelling place of the people from generation to generation. It is from this promise that we as a community seek to gain a heart of wisdom and compassion - to become the dwelling place for God in the world. Can you recall a time when you felt the presence of God providing refuge? Were you the provider or the receiver? Can you recall a time when you became a place of safety for someone else? Share and celebrate each other's varied talents! They give voice to and provide depth to our faith. Our talents give space for the Spirit to breathe!

Here is a new idea about talents offered by the Roman Catholic priest and Old Testament professor Robert Schoenstene having to do with the weight of the talents. A talent was a measure, often comprised of gold or silver, and could weigh up to fifty pounds. A talent was heavy. For early Jewish listeners the weight or heaviness of a talent would likely invoke the Hebrew word *kabod*, which means heavy, weighty, powerful, but also refers to glory, dignity, gravitas. Leaning into this interpretation, the place most associated with weight and glory was God's mercy seat in the temple - the heaviest and most powerful place in revealing God's presence. If we backtrack to the recipients in the parable, the question might be posed as to whether they have been entrusted with the weight of God's mercy. Mercy is not to be hidden away, but rather is to be made known in community for the sake of the other. If people hide mercy, are they failing at one of the great splendors and heaviest tasks God is entrusting to people? Might Jesus be telling this parable to proclaim the reign of God's mercy and our call to steward that mercy for the sake of others?

KID STUDY:

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, the servants who manage them, and the master who responds to their efforts. Knowing that all we have comes from God, what do you have that you can offer in service? You are old enough to serve your church! Read, sing, light candles, or volunteer to bring the bag for the children's sermon. When it comes to being the hands and feet of Jesus, you are just as important as any grown up. Sometimes, there is social pressure at school to act like everyone else and play down your preferences or individual abilities, but remember that God calls you to "bloom where you are planted". Embrace who you are, what you like, and all the ways you use your gifts to bring God into the world.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

The soul is like a housewife who has put all her household in good order and prudently arranged it and well disposed it; she has taken good care that nothing will damage it, her provision for the future is wise, she knows exactly what she is going, she acquires and discards, she does what is proper, she avoids mistakes, and always she knows how everything should be. So it is with the soul: the soul is all love, and love rules in the soul, mighty and powerful, working and resting, doing and not doing, and all which is in the soul and comes to the soul is according to Love's will. For it is Love's power that has seized the soul and led it, sheltered and protected it, given it prudence and wisdom and the sweetness and the strength which belong to love. Like the fish, swimming in the vast sea and resting in its deeps, and like the bird, boldly mounting high in the

sky, so the soul feels its spirit freely moving through the vastness and the depth and the unutterable richness of Love. - Beatrice of Nazareth [Beatrice of Nazareth, trans. Eric Colledge, in Medieval Women's Visionary Literature, ed. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 204.]

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Next Week's Theme (Wed., Nov. 22): Thanksgiving Eve – Giving Thanks

Next Week's Scriptures (Wed., Nov. 22):

First Reading: Deuteronomy 8:7-18

"God will lead you into a land of flowing streams."

Psalm: Psalm 65

"You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty." (Ps. 65:11)

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

"God provides every blessing in abundance."

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

"The healed leper returns to give thanks to Jesus."

Next Week's Theme (Nov. 25 & 26): As you did unto the least of these you did unto me

Next Week's Scriptures (Nov. 25 & 26):

First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

"God will shepherd Israel."

Psalm: Psalm 95:1-7a

"We are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand." (Ps. 95:7)

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

"The reign of Christ."

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

"The coming of the Son of Man; the separation of sheep and goats."

