

**ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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

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September 16 & 17, 2023

Sixteenth 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
Organist			Elena Holub

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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 today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.*

**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.)***

\* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P Blessed be God, the one who forms us, † Jesus who bears the cross, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

C **Amen.**

P Let us bow before God in humility, confessing our sin first privately then together publicly.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P Steadfast and faithful God,

C **you have revealed the ways of justice, yet we fail to follow you. We are overwhelmed by the world's violence and suffering. We are afraid to risk what we have for the sake of others. For the harm we have caused, known and unknown, forgive us. For the unjust demands we place on others and your creation, forgive us. For the ways we turn away from you and our neighbor, forgive us. Lead us back to you and set us on the right path; in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

P Beloved in Christ, God's justice stretches beyond all understanding. God's compassion is beyond compare. In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us. In † Christ, you are already and always forgiven.

C **Amen.**

\* **HYMN ELW - #359 "Where Charity and Love Prevail"**

1. **Where charity and love prevail, there God is ever found; brought here together by Christ's love, by love we thus are bound.**
2. **With grateful joy and holy fear, God's charity we learn; let us with heart and mind and soul now love God in return.**
3. **Let us recall that in our midst dwells Christ, God's holy Son; as members of each body joined, in him we are made one.**
4. **Let strife among us be unknown; let all contentions cease. Be God's the glory that we seek; be his our only peace.**
5. **Let us forgive each other's faults as we our own confess, that we may love each other well in Christian gentleness.**

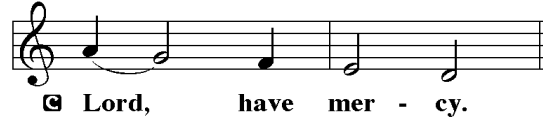
\* **GREETING**

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

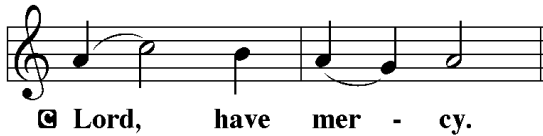
**C And also with you.**

\* **KYRIE** (*Responses Sung*)

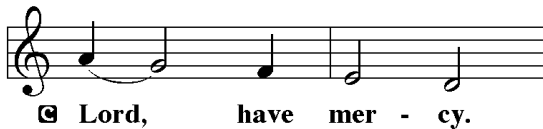
P In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



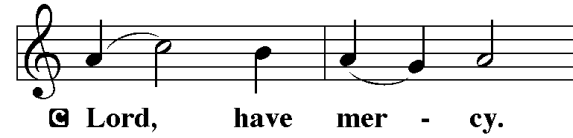
P For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



P For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



P For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.



P Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.



\* **HYMN OF PRAISE:**

P This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia.



1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us



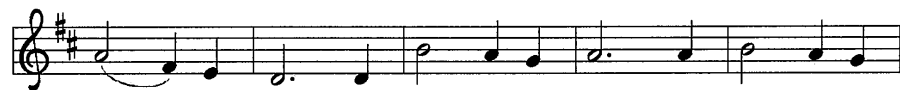
free to be peo - ple of God. Pow - er and rich - es and wis - dom and



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



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



2 Sing with all the peo - ple of God and join in the



hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing and hon - or and glo - ry and



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



*Final refrain*  
This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God, for the Lamb who was slain



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

\* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

**FIRST READING:** Genesis 50:15-21

A Our first reading is from Genesis, chapter 50, verses 15-21.

*After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.*

The reading begins:

<sup>15</sup>Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" <sup>16</sup>So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, <sup>17</sup>'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. <sup>21</sup>So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM:** Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13

A The Psalm today is from Psalm 103, verses 1-13. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

[1]Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

**2Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits —**

<sup>3</sup>who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases;

**4who redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;**

<sup>5</sup>who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

**6O LORD, you provide vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.**

<sup>7</sup>You made known your ways to Moses and your works to the children of Israel.]

**8LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;**

<sup>9</sup>you will not always accuse us, nor will you keep your anger forever.

**10You have not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us according to our iniquities.**

<sup>11</sup>For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.

**12As far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed our transgressions from us.**

**13As a father has compassion for his children, so you have compassion for those who fear you, O LORD.**

**SECOND READING:** Romans 14:1-12

A Our second reading is from Romans, chapter 14, verses 1-12.

*This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.*

The reading begins:

<sup>1</sup>Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.

<sup>2</sup>Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. <sup>5</sup>Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. <sup>6</sup>Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. <sup>7</sup>We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. <sup>9</sup>For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. <sup>10</sup>Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup>For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." <sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

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 18:21-35

*When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.*

P The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 18, verses 21-35.

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

<sup>21</sup>Peter came and said to [Jesus], "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup>"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup>When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; <sup>25</sup>and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup>So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup>And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup>But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' <sup>29</sup>Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' <sup>30</sup>But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup>Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup>Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup>And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup>So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

P The gospel of the Lord.

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

## CHILDREN'S SERMON

### SERMON

\* **HYMN ELW - #605 "Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive"**  
{sing to tune ELW - #632 "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"}

1. "Forgive our sins as we forgive," you taught us, Lord, to pray; but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.
2. How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?
3. In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew: how trifling others' debts to us; how great our debt to you!

**4. Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease; then, by your mercy reconciled, our lives will spread your peace.**

"Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive" – CCLI Song #5982493 Words: Rosamond Eleanor Herklots  
Words © 1969 Oxford University Press CCLI License #1729377  
"O God, Our Help in Ages Past" – CCLI Song #43152 Music: William Croft  
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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 OF INTERCESSION**

A Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

*A brief silence.*

A We pray for this congregation. Open our hearts to practice intentional invitation. Help us to forgive each other, practice patience, and choose welcome over judgment. Move us to care for those in our community seeking refuge and safety. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

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. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

A We pray for peace in all the world, especially in Morocco and the devastation from the earthquake as well as war-torn areas of Ukraine, Sudan and Niger. Bring an end to wars and the destruction of lives and your creation. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

A We pray for all those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:  
Vernon Schindler; L. E. Kansteiner; Carl Geisler; Virginia Fritsch; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

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. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.** *{See all those we pray for on page 15.}*

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. Merciful God,

**C receive our prayer.**

P Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

**C Amen.**

**\* PEACE**

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

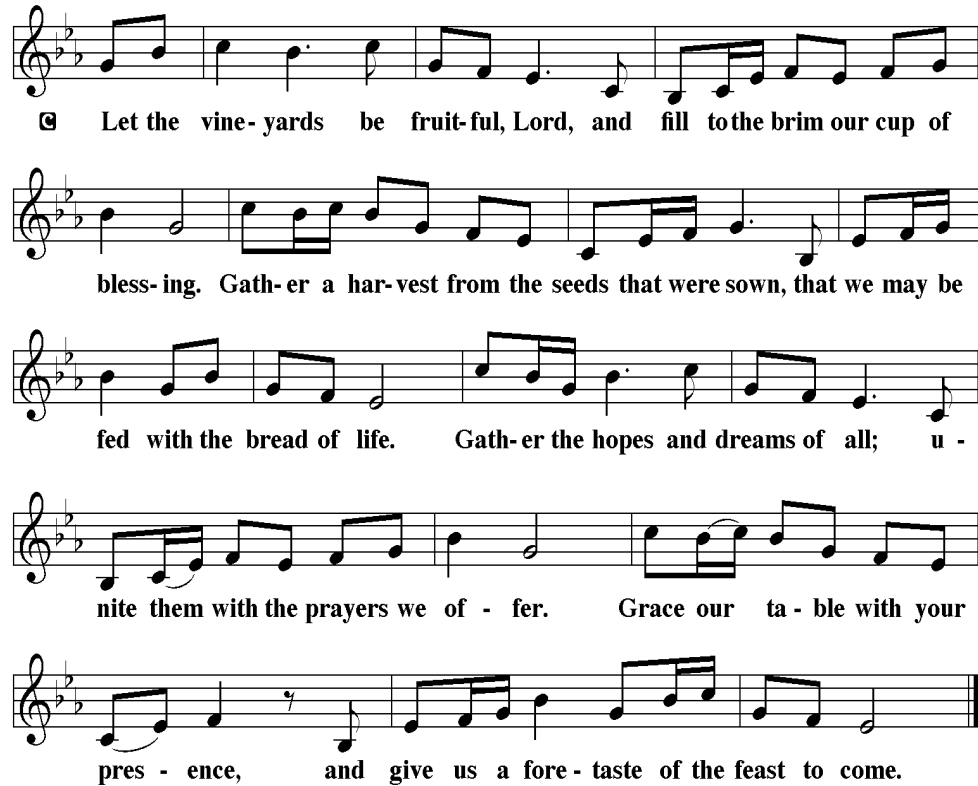
**C And also with you.** *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

***(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 power, God of plenty, all things belong to you. We bring your gifts to the table, that all might be fed. Form us into the body of your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C Amen.

\* EUCHARISTIC 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 Jesus invites you to this table. Come and experience the power of forgiveness.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Kneeling at Rail)

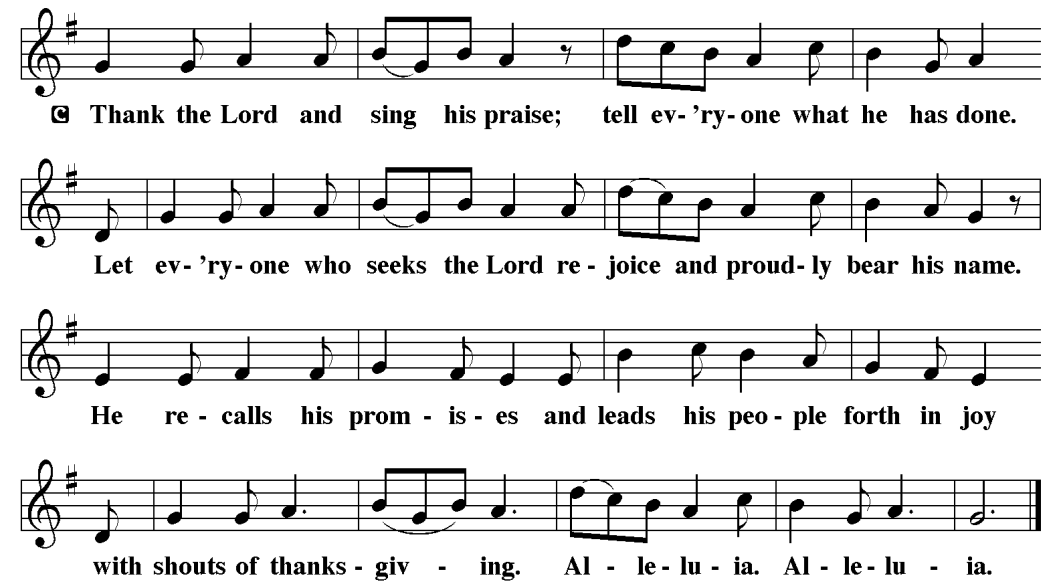
{You will be coming forward to the rail for distribution. **All are welcome for communion.** You will be ushered down the center aisle beginning in the front. Fill in at the railings starting at the side and work your way around to the center, then kneel if you are able. Pastor will hand out the bread. 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. An acolyte follows with an empty tray for you to place your empty individual cup. After receiving communion, please remain at the rails until Pastor has dismissed the entire table with a blessing. 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.

\* POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE (Sung)



☞ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev- 'ry-one what he has done.  
Let ev- 'ry-one who seeks the Lord re - jice and proud-ly bear his name.  
He re - calls his prom - is - es and leads his peo - ple forth in joy  
with shouts of thanks - giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

\* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P Blessed be your name, O God, for we have feasted on your Word, Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts. Strengthened by this food, send us to gather the world to your banquet, where none are left out and all are satisfied. In Jesus' name we pray.

**C Amen.**

\* **BLESSING**

P The God of glory, ☩ Jesus Christ, name above all names, and the Spirit who lives in you, bless you now and forever.

**C Amen.**

\* **HYMN ELW - #656 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"**

*{This is one of your favorite hymns. Please read the brief history found in the back of the bulletin.}*

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  
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\* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace, forgiven to forgive.

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

**POSTULDE**

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**USHERS: SAT:** Harvey Poenitzsch; Bob Poenitzsch; Audrey Rester

**SUN:** Terrel & Robin Maertz; Ruth Bedford

**LAY READERS: SAT:** Rhanda Lattimore

**SUN:** Sharon Johnson

**ACOLYTE:**

**SUN:** Brooks Schindler

**STREAMING:**

**SUN:** Tiffany Lauzon

**SOUND:**

**SUN:** Sydney Eaton

**ALTAR GUILD:** Dyana Booker and Tina Morrow

**WELCOME:** In the words of the Israelites: "The Lord is ... the reason for [our] song, because he has saved [us]" (Exodus 15:2, CEV). Welcome to worship!

**ALTAR WALL FLOWERS** are placed by Kenny & JoAnn Venghaus and Larry & Tootsie Venghaus in loving memory of Kenny and Larry's mother Lucille Venghaus for the anniversary of her birthday on September 14.

**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:** Sept. 2 & 3, 2023 – 184

**Contributions:** Sept. 2 & 3 – \$10,237.01

**Power of One:** Sept. 2 & 3, 2023 – \$51.00

**Building Fund:** Sept. 2 & 3 – \$715.02

**Attendance:** Sept. 9 & 10, 2023 – 208

**Contributions:** Sept. 9 & 10 – \$8,850.86

**Power of One:** Sept. 9 & 10, 2023 – \$49.00

**Building Fund:** Sept. 9 & 10 – \$1,291.44

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

**Wednesday Night Attendance:** – Wed., Sept. 6 – **80 Total**

**BLAST/Confirmation:** 60

**Support Staff:** 20

\* **FAVORITE HYMN: "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" by John Fawcett**

John Fawcett, a Baptist clergyman in England, wrote one of the most favorite "farewell hymns" of all time. He was orphaned at 12, and "bound out" to a tailor working long hours and learning to read by reading "Pilgrim's Progress", a devotional classic by John Bunyan, and eventually mastering it.

Ultimately, he became a pastor at Wainsgate to a group of "people who were all farmers and shepherds, poor as Job's turkey; an uncouth lot whose speech one could hardly understand, unable to read or write; most of them pagans cursed with vice and ignorance and wild tempers." This itinerant preacher was sent to this group. . . and he "made a good beginning."

Fawcett was called to a more affluent congregation in London. It was common practice that pastors would write a hymn relating to the theme of the sermon. It is not known if "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" was written thinking he would move to London, but we do know he and his wife

could not joyfully leave the Wainsgate congregation, and they remained there for 54 years. . . developing a school for area children by adding on to his home. The language of the hymn “connects well with congregations, identifying with the struggles of life and our unity in Christ. No doubt this hymn has been tearfully sung by more Christians upon parting than any other hymn.”

The melody of “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” is known as “DENNIS”, written by Johann (Hans) Georg Nageli. Since 1845, “DENNIS” has been used in numerous other hymns.

**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:** 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; Dorothy Wicke; Randy Wendt; Heather Deviney; Michelle Thraen; Lydia Rojas; Paul Casinger; Dr. Tom Hancher; Leonard Kahlden; Bob Loy.

**Expectant Mothers:** Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner; Jamee Albert.

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

**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.

► **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! ☺

♥♥ 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.



A blood drive will be held in the Lighthouse on **Sunday, September 24, 2023 from 8:00 AM-12:30 PM**. You can sign up online by scanning the QR code on the poster in the hallway or by going to [www.giveblood.org](http://www.giveblood.org). **Sponsor code is P732**. You may also call or text Melinda Zajicek at 979-820-8793 to sign up to donate.

Also, if you can help the day of the drive, please let Melinda know. Thank you for your donations! Put the next blood drive on your calendar, too, which will be *Sunday, December 3, 2023!*

◆ **God's Gals** will meet **Sunday, September 24, 2023 at 6:00 PM at Nancy's Steakhouse** 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. ◆

**Peru Team Meeting:** Our next Peru Team meeting will be **Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 5:00 PM** in the church library. Join us to get an update on Pastor Alan's trip to Peru in July and discuss how we can best serve our South American neighbors. If you have any question, please contact Terri Brasher at 979-732-1127.

+ The **Noon Bible Study group** that meets on Tuesdays in the church library is taking a brief break and will resume class Tuesday, October 3, 2023. They will be studying I & II Thessalonians and Jude. Everyone is invited to attend! +

► **National Night Out:** National Night Out will be held at **St. Paul Lutheran Church parking lot on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 from 6:00-7:30 PM**. We plan to have: hot dogs for all; cold drinks; Praise Band playing; face painting; the Andrus' mules; Fire Department; EMS; Law Enforcement; Game Wardens and Texas Parks & Wildlife; Boy Scouts; balloons for the children; and more! Come, bring your bag chairs and/or lawn chairs and meet some neighbors!





**God's work.  
Our hands.**

**GOD'S WORK OUR HANDS:** St. Paul will once again participate in the annual God's Work Our Hands day! This year we will work this event **Sunday, October 22, 2023**. The time will be **12:15-3:00 PM**. This is an opportunity for all ages to work together to bring about positive changes in our community. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet in the narthex (foyer). T-shirts are \$10 if you would like one. *The deadline to order T-shirts is Wednesday, October 11, 2023.*

♪ **SENIOR EXPLORERS:** Senior Explorers are heading to La Grange to “Czech” out the **Czech Heritage Fest and Muziky**. We will depart **St. Paul at 3:30 PM on Friday, October 20, 2023**. We will have time to browse in the Heritage Center before heading out to the main deck for the beginning of the festival. Chicken and dumplings will be served at 5:30 PM with Dujka Brothers playing at 6:00 PM. We plan to return to St. Paul by 7:00 PM – just in time for the Columbus football game. Lawn chairs are welcome, but no coolers. *Please sign up by Sunday, October 15, 2023 in the narthex.* For more information, please contact Kevin Page at 979-732-0845.



**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 choir room**. For questions or more information, contact Peggy Geisler at 979-732-0350.

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

**Today (Sept. 17) –** 6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)  
**Mon., Sept. 18 –** 9:30 AM – Staff Meeting  
 1:00 PM – Nursing Home Team & Pastor to TLC  
 6:00 PM – Church Council  
**Tues., Sept. 19 –** 10:00 AM – Pastor Alan to Columbus Oaks  
 5:30 PM – Prayer Team (library)  
**Wed., Sept. 20 –** 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel  
 9:00 AM – Morning Circle (library)  
 10:00 AM-1:00 PM – Colorado County Senior Connections (Lighthouse)  
 1:30 PM – Neighbor-to-Neighbor Quarterly Meeting (library)  
 5:00 PM – Meal  
 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation & HS Youth  
**Thurs., Sept. 21 –** 5:30 PM – Grief Support Group (choir room)  
**Fri., Sept. 22 –** 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)  
**Sat., Sept. 23 –** 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

**Next Sun., Sept. 24 –** 8:00 AM-12:30 PM – Blood Drive (Lighthouse)  
 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship  
 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation  
 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship  
 12:00 PM – The Gathering to El Campo for Bowling  
 6:00 PM – God's Gals to Nancy's Steakhouse, Columbus  
 6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

#### **UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS**

**Sunday, September 17, 2023 Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179**

A mystic who was widely influential within the church, Hildegard advised and reproved kings and popes, wrote poems and hymns, and produced treatises in medicine, theology, and natural history. She was also a musician and artist.

**Monday, September 18, 2023 Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, died 1961**

A Swedish diplomat, Hammarskjöld served as the second Secretary General of the United Nations until his death in a plane crash while trying to negotiate peace in present-day Zambia. His journal, published as *Markings*, revealed the depth of his Christian faith.

**Wednesday, September 20, 2023 Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)**

A native of Ohio, Trout served parishes in several parts of the United States before being elected bishop of the South Pacific District of the American Lutheran Church, the first African American Lutheran to serve in such a capacity.

**Thursday, September 21, 2023 Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist**

Matthew (or Levi) was a tax collector in Capernaum for the Roman government. Tax collectors were frequently despised for dishonesty and for assisting the occupiers. Jesus nevertheless showed love for them, and chose Matthew to be a disciple.

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#### **SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE CHALLENGE TO FORGIVE**

Being a disciple requires an expansive perspective of forgiveness. Today our perspective is broadened by the good news that God's forgiveness is not based on our idea of fairness, but rather on abundant, unimaginable grace. The Psalm reminds us that God does not deal with us according to our sins or repay us according to our iniquities. The king forgives our entire debt, no matter how enormous it is! Challenge yourself to stretch your perspective and forgive. In the gospel today with Peter, we learn to stop keeping score.

#### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:**

Today's gospel is a harsh parable about forgiveness. Do you feel condemned by the reading? Take heart! We ALL receive God's mercy. Welcome to worship! You are forgiven. Be empowered to forgive others.

“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” We hear and say these words every week in worship and personal prayer. Jesus tells Peter he should forgive someone seventy-seven times. This number isn’t really an upper limit; instead, we learn that God’s boundless grace is a model for how we are to forgive. After we have hurt someone, most of us have experienced the challenge and relief of apologizing and being forgiven. Explore the feeling of being forgiven for your sin against another person. You can help others feel that freedom and sense of relief when you forgive.

Forgiveness is not an easy thing to do. Again and again we fall back on a limited human understanding of what is “fair.” Looking at the story of Joseph and his brothers from Genesis, it’s easy for us to say that his brothers really didn’t deserve forgiveness. Even their plea for forgiveness is dishonest and manipulative - have they really repented? Joseph takes the wider view. He realizes that it isn’t his brothers’ intentions that matter, but God’s. God’s forgiveness is much greater than what is fair, much greater than what we deserve.

Thorny issues, power struggles, and pain abound in families, faith communities, cities, and nations. What does a new, broadened perspective look like in our lives as Christians? Naming sources of shame and hurt is a critical first step to healing. If you believe that all are truly welcomed by God, you are also called to share the good news of that welcome in all you say and do.

We all know that forgiveness isn’t as simple as just saying “I forgive you.” It’s difficult work, and it takes practice. Like the king in the story, sometimes we try to forgive, but we keep the offense in the back of our minds, ready to reinstate it if the opportunity arises. The story illustrates the awful consequences of this failure to truly forgive. So keep practicing – with the understanding that although we may fall short in our personal efforts to forgive, God forgives completely.

**KID STUDY:**

How many times do you think a person should be forgiven for doing something wrong? Once? Twice? Three times? Jesus’ disciple (student) Peter guessed seven times. Jesus surprised the group when he replied that the number of times a person should be forgiven is not seven, but seventy times seven! That’s 490 times! Jesus was trying to get Peter to understand that we shouldn’t worry about keeping count of how many times we forgive someone. We should just keep on forgiving just like God continues to forgive us. Give thanks to God for loving us and forgiving us without keeping count. Try your best to forgive other people because God has forgiven you.

**INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:**

*The evil of remembering past offenses is twofold: it is inexcusable before God, and it serves to recall past sins already forgiven and places them against us. Nothing whatsoever does God so hate, and turn away from, as cherishing remembrance of past offenses and fostering our anger against another. If we must remember offenses, let us remember only our own. If we remember our own sins, we shall never store up the sins of others. I shall make bold to say that this sin is*

*more grievous than any other sin. Let us be zealous in nothing so much as in keeping ourselves free from anger and from not seeking to be reconciled with those who are opposed to us. Neither is this my word only, but the word of that God who shall come to judge us. - John Chrysostom [John Chrysostom, in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, IV, 289.]*

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**Next Week's Theme (Sept. 23 & 24):** God's freedom to give to the last the same as the first / Laborers in the vineyard

**Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 23 & 24):**

**First Reading:** Jonah 3:10 - - 4:11

*“God's concern for the city of Nineveh.”*

**Psalm:** Psalm 145:1-8

*“The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Ps. 145:8)*

**Second Reading:** Philippians 1:21-30

*“Standing firm in the gospel.”*

**Gospel:** Matthew 20:1-16

*“The parable of the vineyard workers.”*