

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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September 9 & 10, 2023

Fifteenth Sunday of 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
Organist			Joan Hunsicker

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

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

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.)

RECOGNITION OF GRANDPARENTS

* **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 and mercy, 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 and mercy 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 - #522 "As We Gather at Your Table"**

1. As we gather at your table, as we listen to your word, help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts and minds be stirred. Nourish us with sacred story till we claim it as our own; teach us through this holy banquet how to make Love's vict'ry known.

2. Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life; send us forth to love and serve you, bringing peace where there is strife. Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave; may we still behold your image in the world you died to save.

3. Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and least. There no more will envy blind us nor will pride our peace destroy, as we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.

CCLI Song #5100983 Words: Carl P. Daw, Jr.
Music: *Oude en Nieuwe Hollandse Boerenlities en Contradansen*, 1710; arr. Julius Rontgen
Words: ©1989 Hope Publishing Company Music: Public Domain CCLI License #1729377

* **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 O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11

A Our first reading is from Ezekiel, chapter 33, verses 7-11.

God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem — gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.

The reading begins:

⁷So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life. ¹⁰Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 119:33-40

A The Psalm today is from Psalm 119, verses 33-40. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end.

³⁴**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching; I shall keep it with all my heart.**

³⁵Lead me in the path of your commandments, for that is my desire.

³⁶**Incline my heart to your decrees and not to unjust gain.**

³⁷Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood; give me life in your way.

³⁸**Fulfill your promise to your servant, which is for those who fear you.**

³⁹Turn away the reproach that I dread, because your judgments are good.

⁴⁰**Behold, I long for your commandments; by your righteousness enliven me.**

SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14

A Our second reading is from Romans, chapter 13, verses 8-14.

The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

A Please stand as you are comfortable for the gospel.

* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

* **GOSPEL:** Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals — and the church as a whole — should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.

P The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 18, verses 15-20.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SERMON

* **HYMN ELW - #603 “God, When Human Bonds are Broken”**

- 1. God, when human bonds are broken and we lack the love or skill to restore the hope of healing, give us grace and make us still.**
- 2. Through that stillness, with your Spirit come into our world of stress, for the sake of Christ forgiving all the failures we confess.**
- 3. You in us are bruised and broken: hear us as we seek release from the pain of earlier living; set us free and grant us peace.**
- 4. Send us, God of new beginnings, humbly hopeful into life. Use us as a means of blessing: make us stronger, give us faith.**
- 5. Give us faith to be more faithful, give us hope to be more true, give us love to go on learning: God, encourage and renew!**

CCLI Song #4968841 Words: Fred Kaan Music: William Henry Monk
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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 Hold us accountable, O God. Show your church where repentance is needed and lead us in paths of intentional compassion and listening. Help us extend hands of reconciliation and care, especially in relationships with other Christians and people of other faiths. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A Inspire us to lead with honor, O God. Guide judges and legislators, police, and government officials to create and uphold just laws. Move us to treat all people with dignity and guide our conversations with one another. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A Awaken us, O God. Challenge and encourage your people to value the vocation to which each is called. We pray for all discerning new possibilities or changing employment. In all our diverse callings, teach us to love our neighbor above all else. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

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

C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all those in need of healing, O God, and whose needs are diverse and known to you including;
; 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 all those battling cancer, O God, that they may know comfort and strength. *(Pause for those we are praying for.)* Merciful God, 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; and Bob Loy.

C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all expectant mothers, O God, and especially for: Olivia Leyendecker; Cassidy Zajicek Parks; Courtney Busselman; Nancy Gorman; Camille Stancik; Kyndall Beettner; and Jamee Albert that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

A We pray for all those who reside in care facilities and the homebound, O God, and especially for:

Joey Denby; Edwin Oevermann; Paul Minar, Sr.; Adrian Fritsch; Coy Dell Schindler; Madeline Menke; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Jane Booker; Pat Brasher; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Ronnie Rogers; Joyce Dehmer; Donna Dehmer; Cherie Moore; and Lauren Lamb that they receive your caring and compassion. Merciful God,

C receive our prayer.

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

C receive our prayer.

A We pray, O God, 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.

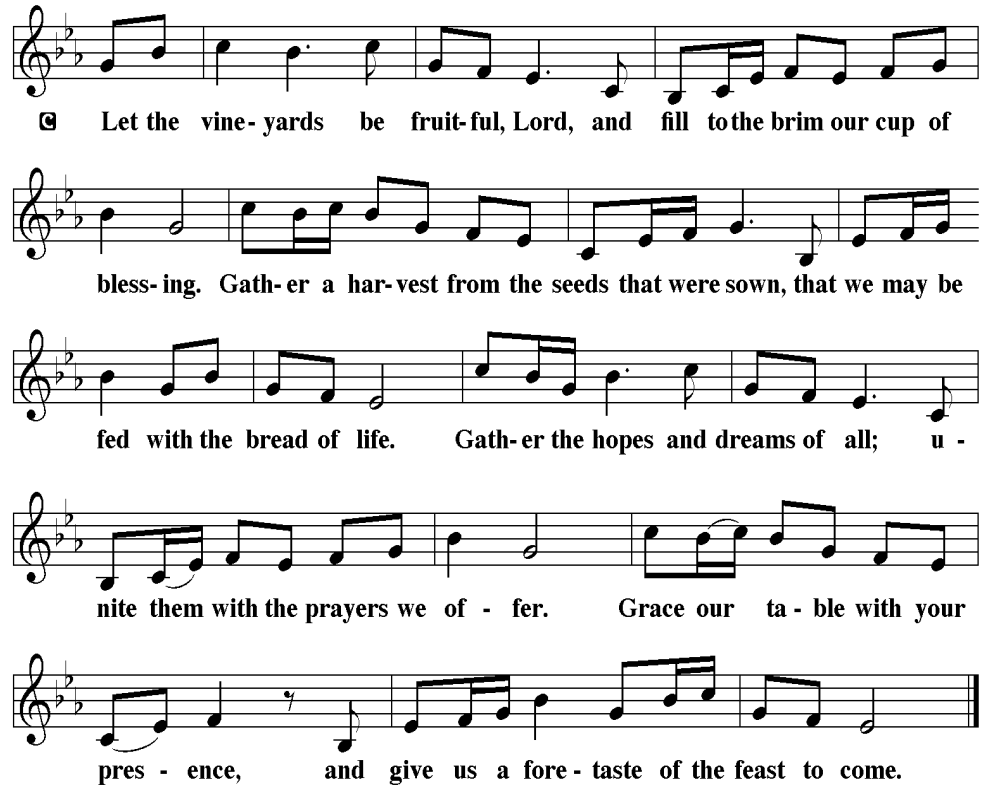
C And also with you. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

(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)*



C 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.

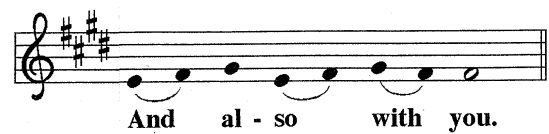
* **OFFERING PRAYER**

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.

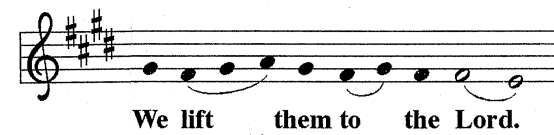
* **GREAT THANKSGIVING** *(Responses Sung)*

P The Lord be with you.



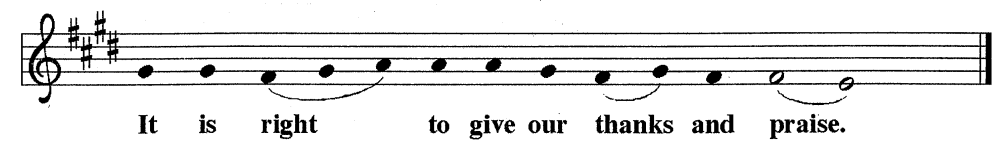
And al - so with you.

P Lift up your hearts.



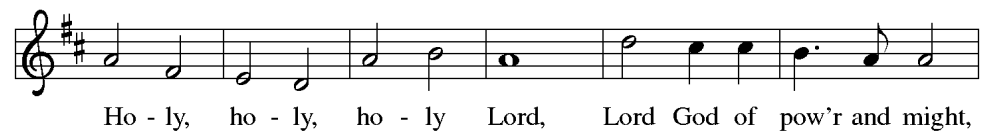
We lift them to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

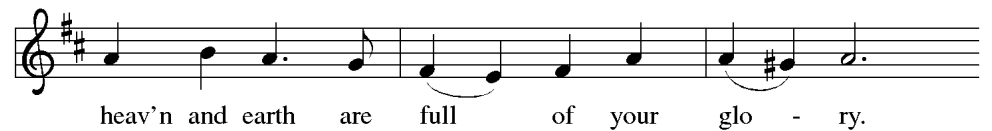


It is right to give our thanks and praise.

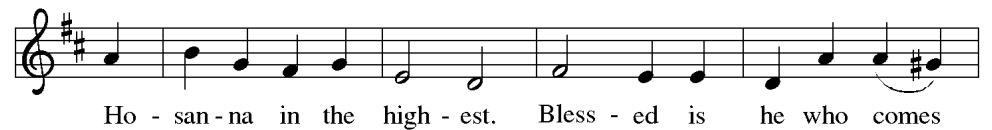
P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



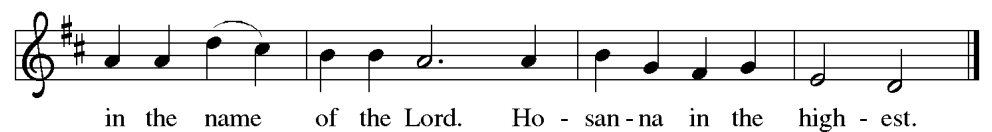
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san-na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san-na in the high - est.

* **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 Jesus invites you to this table. Come and be reconciled to Christ.

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.}

(Sung)



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

(Please be seated.)

* **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-joice 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 - #836 “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”**
{This is one of your favorite hymns. Please read the brief history found in the back of the bulletin.}

1. Joyful, joyful we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love!
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee, praising thee, their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the gloom of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
2. All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heav'n reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird, and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.
3. Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine;
teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine!

CCLI Song #25321 Words: Henry van Dyke Music: Ludwig van Beethoven
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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. God is at work in you. C Thanks be to God, and we will.

POSTULDE

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USHERS: SAT: The Brent Gorman Family

SUN: Sonny & Tiffany Lauzon

LAY READERS: SAT: Pastor John Hunsicker

SUN: Tiffany Lauzon

ACOLYTE: SAT: Gracelyn Gorman

SUN: Paisley Stancik

STREAMING:

SUN: Brian Lighthill

SOUND:

SUN: Sydney Eaton

ALTAR GUILD: Dyana Booker and Tina Morrow

WELCOME: Welcome to worship, Christian education and fellowship — a chance to be fed and nourished by God's Word before being sent again to serve the world in the week ahead.

ALTAR WALL FLOWERS are placed by Fay & Marv Ulbricht in thanks for God's many blessings and in celebration of their 37th wedding anniversary.

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

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

* **FAVORITE HYMN: “The Hymn of Joy” also called “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”**

In 1907 Henry van Dyke wrote “The Hymn of Joy” fully intending it to be sung to the musical setting of “Ode to Joy” which was a famous melody in the final movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's final symphony, Symphony No. 9. The poem was first published in 1911.

The Berkshire Mountains were his inspiration for the hymn. The verses contain common Christian feelings and desires which are appropriate regardless of the century. Attesting to its timelessness, the poem may be sung “together by people who know the thought of the age and are not afraid that any truth of science will destroy religion, or any revolution on earth. . . . This is a hymn of trust and joy and hope. It is considered one of the most joyful expressions in the English language.

Van Dyke's poem was augmented when Chris Tomlin added a refrain about the coming of Emmanuel thereby turning it into a Christmas song. Van Dyke credited Beethoven with the success of the hymn stating, “It was written with the music steadily in mind, and whatever merit it contains is due to Beethoven's soaring and uplifting melody.”

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

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

Thank you! 😊



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

+ The **Noon Bible Study group** that meets on Tuesdays in the church library will be taking a brief break and **will not be meeting in September**. They will resume class Tuesday, October 3, 2023 and will be studying I & II Thessalonians and Jude. Everyone is invited to attend! +



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

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

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

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.



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. 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., Sept. 11 – 9:30 AM – Staff Meeting
Tues., Sept. 12 – 9:00 AM-12:00 PM – Quilters (Lighthouse)
 10:30 AM – Pastor Alan to TLC
 5:30 PM- Stewardship Team (library)
Wed., Sept. 13 – 8:30 AM-12:00 PM – Columbus Garden Club (Lighthouse)
 9:00 AM – CLA Chapel
 10:00 AM – Nursing Home Team to Columbus Oaks
 2:00 PM – Nursing Home Team to The Oaks
 5:00 PM – Meal
 5:30 PM – BLAST, Confirmation and HS Youth
Thurs., Sept. 14 – 10:00-11:30 AM – Manna for Moms (Lighthouse)
 5:00 PM – Worship Team (library)
Fri., Sept. 15 – 10:30 AM – Adult Bible Study (library)
Sat., Sept. 16 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., Sept. 17 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
 10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School and Confirmation
 11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship
 6:00-8:00 PM – Marriage Course (Lighthouse)

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, died 407
 John was a priest in Antioch and an outstanding preacher. His eloquence earned him the nickname "Chrysostom" ("golden mouth"). Appointed bishop of Constantinople, seat of the empire, he criticized corruption in the court. As a result, he was exiled by the empress.

Thursday, September 14, 2023 Holy Cross Day
 Helena, mother of Constantine, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and found what may be the actual site of Jesus' crucifixion. Her son built two churches there, and the dedication of one of them gave rise to this celebration of our Lord's victory on the cross.

Saturday, September 16, 2023 Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, died around 258
 Cyprian served as a bishop during a time of great persecution of Christians. He insisted on receiving back those who had left the faith under duress. He also provided medical care during a severe epidemic.

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SERVICE OVERVIEW: THE CHALLENGE TO FORGIVE

Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." After Pentecost, we are repeatedly reminded that God has not abandoned us and that Christ's resurrection and ascension are a beginning for us, not an end. The readings this week focus on the practical work of the gathered Christian community: turning from sin to repentance, from conflict to reconciliation. The question is as relevant today as it was for the disciples and the first Christians: how do we live and work together as the body of Christ? We have been saved by grace, liberated by God's love to love one another. What does it mean for us and for our community to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and to clothe ourselves in love?

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today's gospel gives advice about how Christians are to deal with controversies within the believing community. Jesus' instructions to the disciples about confronting those who cause harm are often interpreted as just steps for conflict resolution. The good news in the reading is the last line: *that Christ is among us always*. Welcome to worship! Receive Christ's gift of himself in word, sacrament, and community.

The way Jesus teaches was and continues to be profoundly counter-cultural. This in itself can present as barriers to those who are resistant to change and universal acceptance as "the way it's always been" transforms. The church is not a social club. It exists in order to bring about the challenging work of reconciliation and forgiveness. God calls us into community knowing that being in community is hard. In scripture we can find practical guidance for gathering through good and hard times. The Holy Spirit is always at work in, through, and among us to gather and regather us again. In community we meet and become Christ's body in ways that are impossible for us as individuals; all the commandments are fulfilled in this call to love of neighbor.

The diversity of Christians and the way we interact with each other encompass something that can be described as a holy space. The idea that when two people come together and commit to seeing each other, in that mutual act of recognition they make something new: a new entity that is their relationship. The concept of the "third space" sounds very similar to Jesus' reminder that he would be present when two or more are gathered in his name. What newness might we discover when we take the time to see one another and commit to bridging the conflicts that cause divisions in our world?

Let go of resentment and allow yourself to express compassion and grace. Acknowledge your humanity as well as the humanity of those you forgive. Hear Jesus' instruction as an invitation for compassion and a way for you to be free from the shame, resentment, and judgment that binds you.

KID STUDY:

Living together in community, we don't always agree. Most of you have experienced conflict with classmates, siblings, and other family members. In today's gospel reading Jesus teaches that working through these disagreements is a process that sometimes involves the whole community. Jesus teaches about making peace face to face with another person, and if that

doesn't work, in the company of someone who can help make peace. Connect this peacemaking to when we share the peace with one another during worship - even with those who have wronged us. How and where can you share the peace of God you freely receive outside the church's walls?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

"Give me a lever and a fulcrum," said the man of science, "and I'll shift the world." Archimedes wasn't talking to God, so his request wasn't granted; and in any case he was only thinking of the material world. But the saints really have enjoyed the privilege he asked for; the fulcrum God told them to use was nothing less than God's self, and the lever was prayer. Only it must be the kind of prayer that sets the heart all on fire with love; that's how the saints shift the world in our own day, and that how they'll do it to the end of time. - Thérèse of Lisieux [Thérèse of Lisieux, Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, trans. Ronald Knox (New York: P.J. Kenedy and Sons, 1958), 310-311.]

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Next Week's Theme (Sept. 16 & 17): The challenge to forgive

Next Week's Scriptures (Sept. 16 & 17):

First Reading: Genesis 50:15-21

"Joseph reconciles with his brothers."

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

"LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy." (Ps. 103:8)

Second Reading: Romans 14:1-12

"Accepting diversity in the community of faith."

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

"A parable of forgiveness in the community of faith."