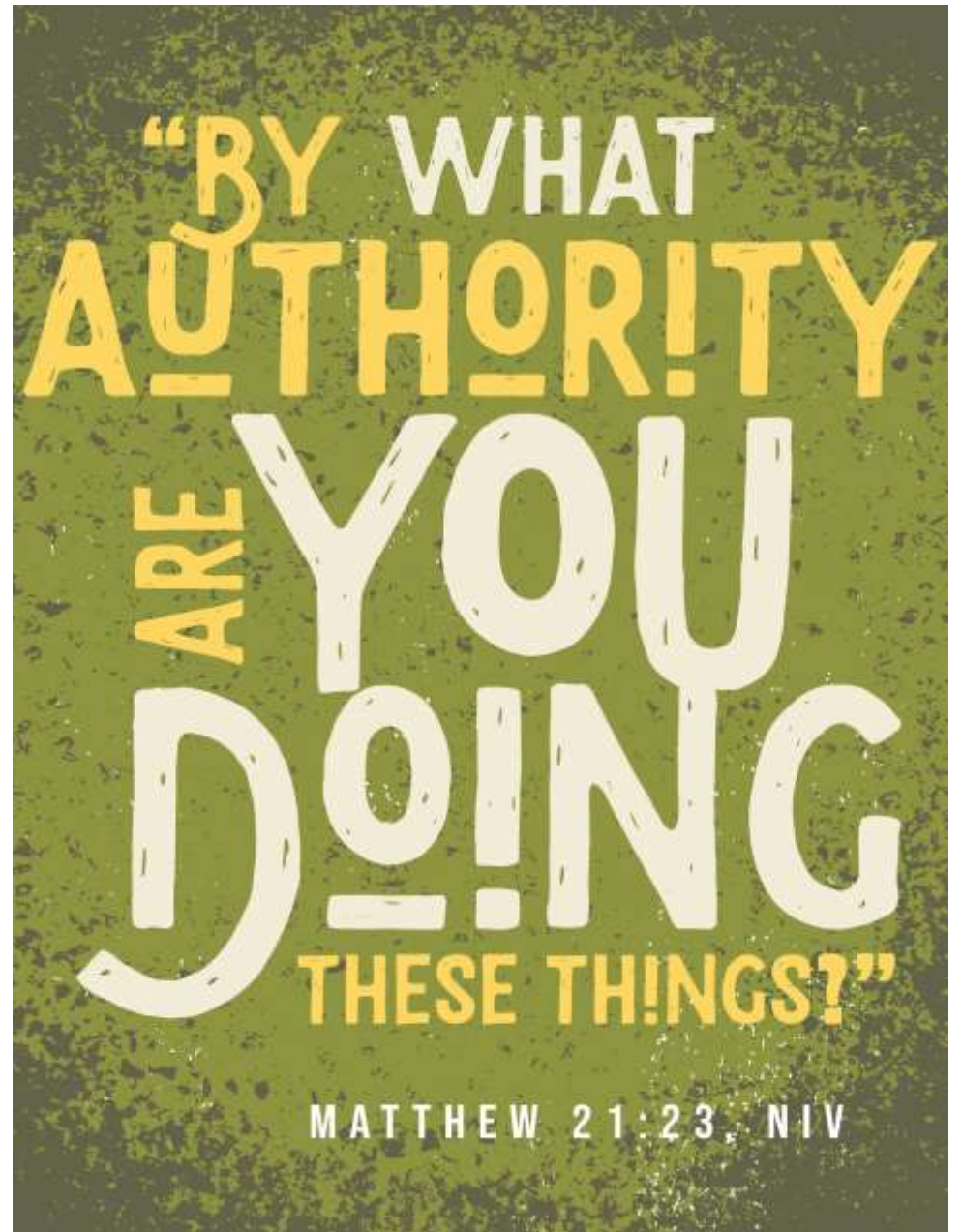




Sunday, September 27, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church

It is a joy to gather together for worship!

St. Paul Purpose Statement

Living Christ centered lives so we may love all, serve our community, and share the Word.

Sunday Worship Schedule

9:00 a.m. In-person worship with Holy Communion

10:15 a.m. In-person Sunday School – September – May

Communion

We celebrate Jesus' presence each week in Holy Communion. This is the Lord's Supper and Jesus invites us: whether you are a lifelong Lutheran, or just considering Christianity; if you are an infant or elderly; if your family has been in the United States for generations, or has only recently arrived; if you are LGBTQIA+ or straight; if you live with disabilities, chronic illness, or are able-bodied and currently healthy; if you are home-blessed or homeless; ... YOU are welcome at God's meal of grace at St. Paul.

Accessibility

Handicap parking, entrance, wheelchair, and restrooms are available. Sound amplifiers and large print bulletins are available. Please ask an usher for assistance.

Children's Offering

The September Children's offering will go to towards The Buddy Bag program. Be assured that every penny donated goes only to the cost of purchasing the food. All administrative costs are covered separately.

Pastor Mark Luepke, Part-time Interim

pastormark@stpaulsterling.com

1701 16th Ave. Sterling, IL 61081

815-625-3069

Church email: stpaulsterling@comcast.net

www.stpaulsterling.com

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Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus' parable about two sons who don't do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

Prelude

"'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

By David Paxton

Welcome/Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

All: Amen.

P: Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

All: Compassionate God, we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

P: Hear this good news: We have peace with God through † Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace.
All: Amen.

Gathering Hymn
“God Is Here!”
ELW #526

1 God is here! As we your peo - ple meet to of - fer
2 Here are sym - bols to re - mind us of our life - long
3 Here our chil - dren find a wel - come in the Shep - herd's
4 Lord of all, of church and king - dom, in an age of

praise and prayer, may we find in full - er mea - sure
need of grace; here are ta - ble, font, and pul - pit;
flock and fold; here as bread and wine are tak - en,
change and doubt, keep us faith - ful to the gos - pel;

what it is in Christ we share. Here, as in the
here the cross has cen - tral place. Here in hon - es -
Christ sus - tains us as of old. Here the ser - vants
help us work your pur - pose out. Here, in this day's

world a - round us, all our var - ied skills and arts
ty of preach - ing, here in si - lence, as in speech,
of the Ser - vant seek in wor - ship to ex - plore
ded - i - ca - tion, all we have to give, re - ceive;

wait the com - ing of the Spir - it in - to o - pen minds and hearts.
here, in new - ness and re - new - al, God the Spir - it comes to each.
what it means in dai - ly liv - ing to be - lieve and to a - dore.
we, who can - not live with - out you, we a - dore you! We be - lieve!

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
Music: ABBOT'S LEIGH, Cyril V. Taylor, 1907–1991
Text © 1979 and Music © 1942, ren. 1970 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188.
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GREETING

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

Kyrie

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, have mer - cy.

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.
Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,
let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mer - cy.

Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

Hymn of Praise

Refrain



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



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

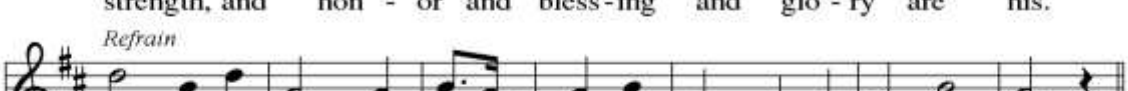


free to be peo-ple of God. Pow-er and rich-es and wis-dom and

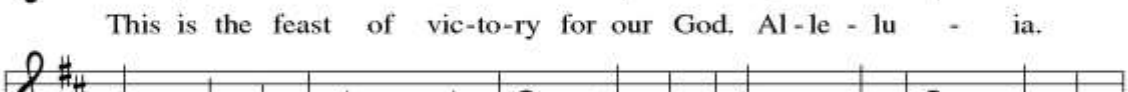


strength, and hon-or and bless-ing and glo-ry are his.

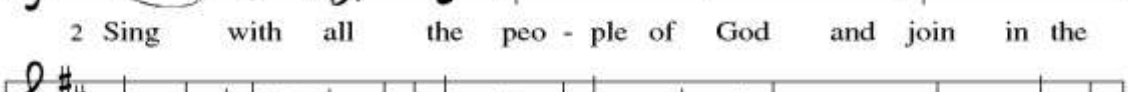
Refrain



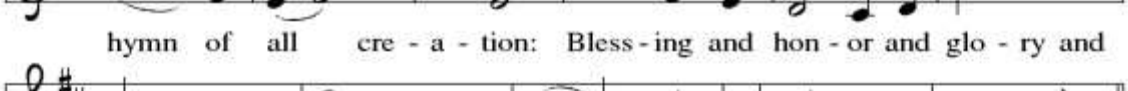
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le-lu-ia.



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

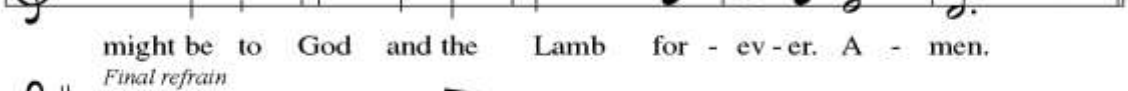


hymn of all cre-a-tion: Bless-ing and hon-or and glo-ry and

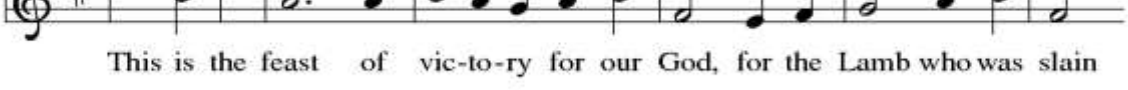


might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A-men.

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: Let us pray together:
All: God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? ³ As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins who shall die.

²⁵ Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶ When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed, they shall die.

²⁷ Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life.

²⁸ Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,
All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-9

R: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

All: My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.

R: Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

All: Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths.

R: Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

All: Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.

R: Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

All: You are gracious and upright, O LORD; therefore you teach sinners in your way.

R: You lead the lowly in justice and teach the lowly your way.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

¹If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,

⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human,

⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name,

¹⁰so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

R: Word of God, Word of Life,

All: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 21st chapter.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’” ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered

Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord,
All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Children’s Message

Sermon

“Turn, Then, and Live”

Hymn of the Day

“Thy Word”

Refrain



Thy word is a lamp un-to my feet and a light un-to my path.



1 When I feel a-fraid, think I've lost my way, still you're there right be -



side me, and noth-ing will I fear as long as you are near.

Refrain



Please be near me to the end.



2 I will not for-get your love for me, and yet my heart for-ev-er is



wan-der-ing. Je-sus, be my guide and hold me to your side, and

Refrain



I will love you to the end.

Text: Psalm 119:105, refrain; Michael W. Smith, stanzas

Music: Amy Grant

Text and music © 1984 Meadowgreen Music, admin. EMI Christian Music Publishing; and Bug and Bear Music, admin. Word Music, Inc.

Apostles Creed

P: Trusting in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, let us profess our faith through the words of the Apostles' Creed:

All: 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 power of 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

Prayers of Intercession

P: Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

P: Hear us, God.

All: Your mercy is great.

P: Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

All: And also with you!

P: Let us share a sign of Christ's peace in whatever way you are comfortable.

Offering

"Yes, I Will"

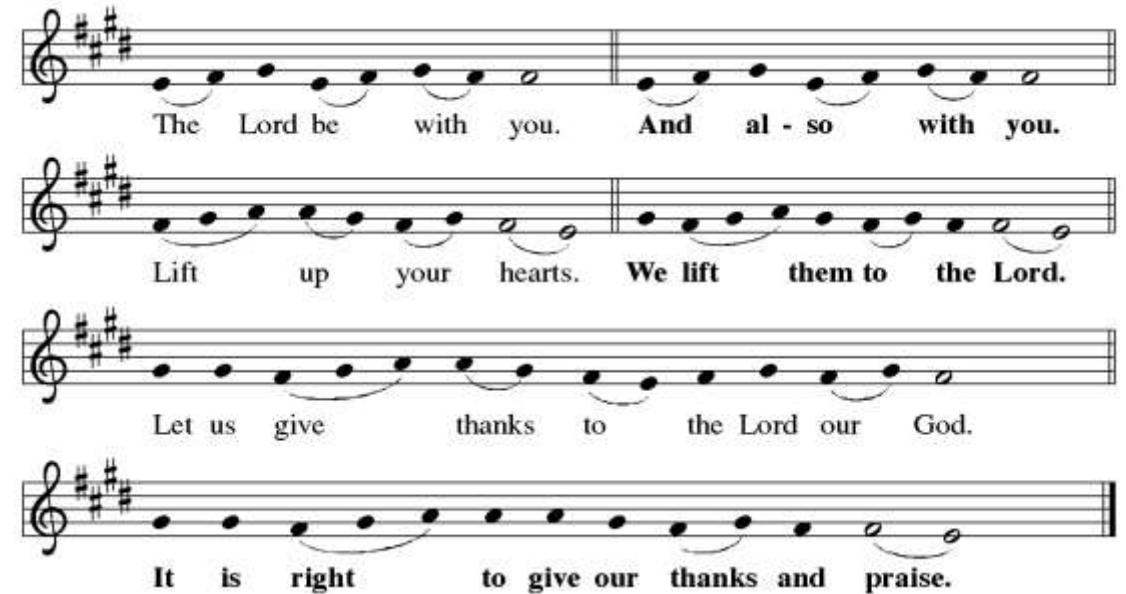
Words and Music by Eddie Hoagland, Jonathan Smith and Mia Fieldes

Offering Prayer

P: God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always.

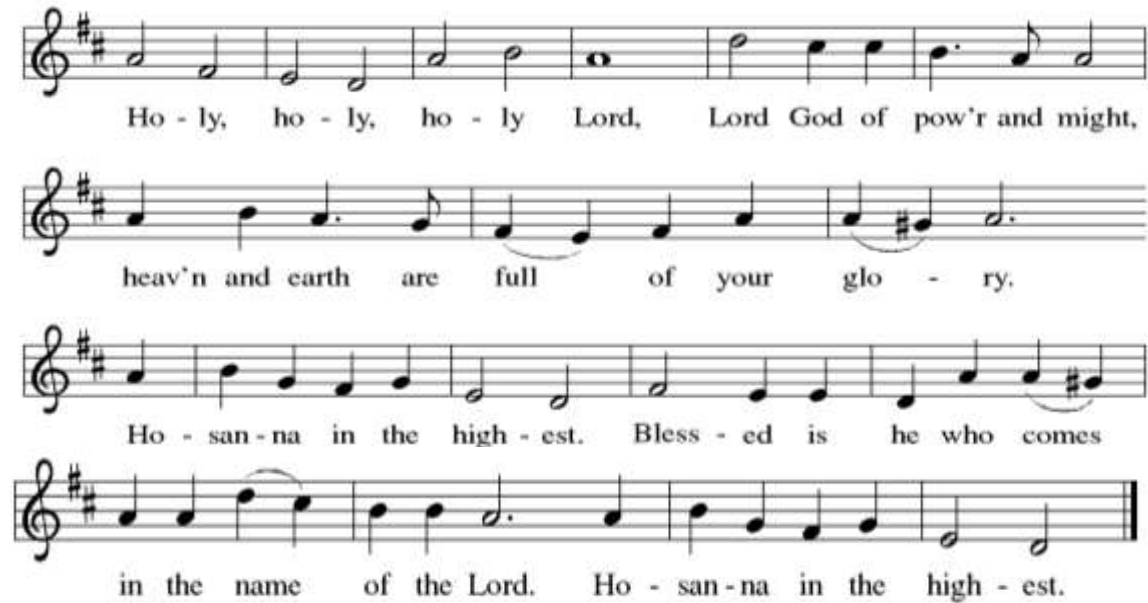
All: Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving



P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

“Holy, Holy, Holy”



The Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

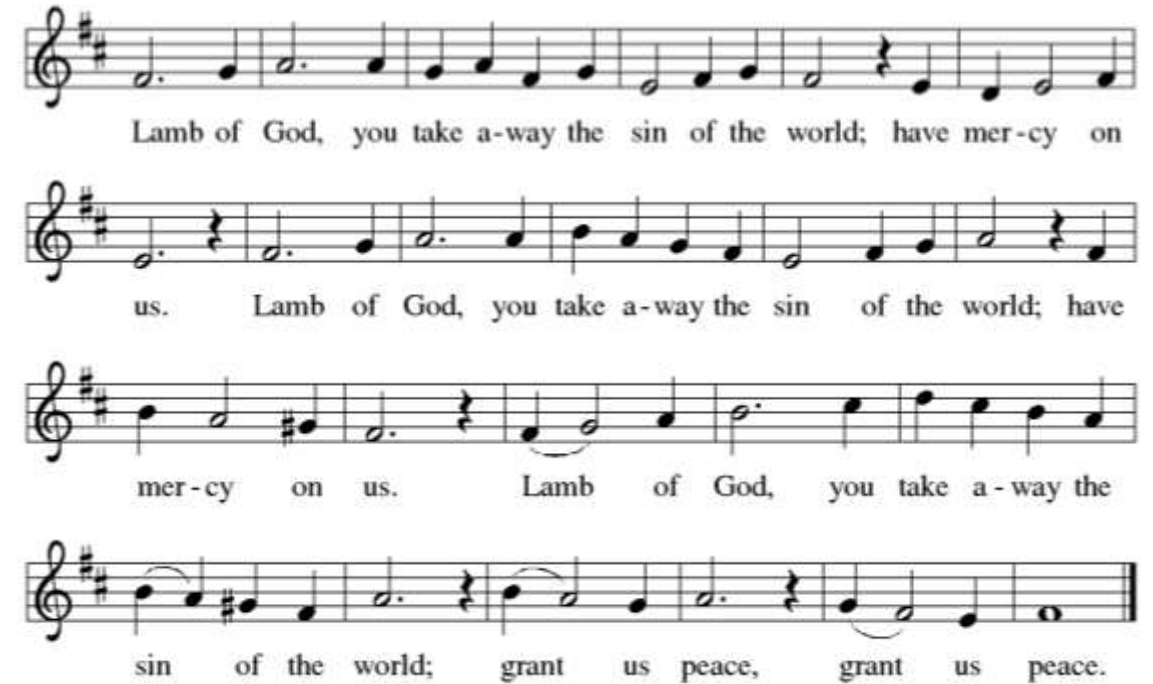
**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Christ invites you to this table. All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

Communion

“Lamb of God”



Communion Music

**“It is Well With My Soul”
By John Turner**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.

All: Amen.

P Let us pray.

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

All: Amen.

Blessing

P: The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind, in the body of Christ Jesus.

All: Amen.

P: The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances through the interceding of the Spirit.

All: Amen.

P: The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever.

All: Amen.

Sending Song

"The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing"

ELW #531

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of nine staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some lines having three different versions (1, 2, 3) for different parts. The score includes a 'Refrain' section marked with a bracket and the number 3, indicating a triplet. The lyrics are: 1 The trum - pets sound, the an - gels sing, the feast is 2 Ta - bles are la - den with good things; oh, taste the 3 The hun - gry heart he sat - is - fies, of - fers the read - y to be - gin. The gates of heav'n are o - pen wide, peace and joy he brings. He'll fill you up with love di - vine; poor his par - a - dise. Now hear all heav'n and earth ap - plaud and Je - sus wel - comes you in - side. he'll turn your wa - ter in - to wine. the a - maz - ing good - ness of the Lord. Refrain Sing with thank - ful - ness songs of pure de - light. Come and rev - el in heav - en's love and light. Take your place at the ta - ble of the King. The feast is read - y to be - gin; the feast is read - y to be - gin.

Text: Graham Kendrick, b. 1950

Music: Graham Kendrick

Text and music © 1989 Make Way Music, admin. Music Services in the Western Hemisphere

Dismissal

P: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

All: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

“Come, Thou Almighty King”

By Mary McDonald

We Remember in Prayer; those on our Home Visitation list and those on our prayer list: Craig Green, Tricia M., Ken & Stephanie, Richard J., Callahan McCallister, Brock Woessner, Lori Dewey, Michelle Klinger, Matt Friel, Sandy Julifs, Mike, and Phyllis Jacobson.

Worship Assistants:

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Stacey Avelar

Acolytes – Avelar family

Greeters – Bob & Judy Bartel

Ushers – Keith Peugh, Dan Dir

Reader – Keith Peugh

Sound – Bradyn Arians

Communion Assistant – JoAnn Garcia

Altar Guild – Ann Beswick, JoAnn Garcia

Musicians:

Lori Attig

Julie Woessner DeJonge

Next Week – October 4

Outdoor Worship – Pet Blessing

Worship Assistants:

Presider – Pastor Jana Howson

Opener/Head Usher/Closer – Mary Ordean

Acolytes – Ordean family

Greeters – Audrey & Cathy Cox

Ushers – Donna Kendall, John Renner

Reader – JoAnn Garcia

Sound – David Carrillo

Communion Assistant – John Renner

Altar Guild – Ann Beswick, JoAnn Garcia

Coffee Fellowship – *Volunteer Needed*