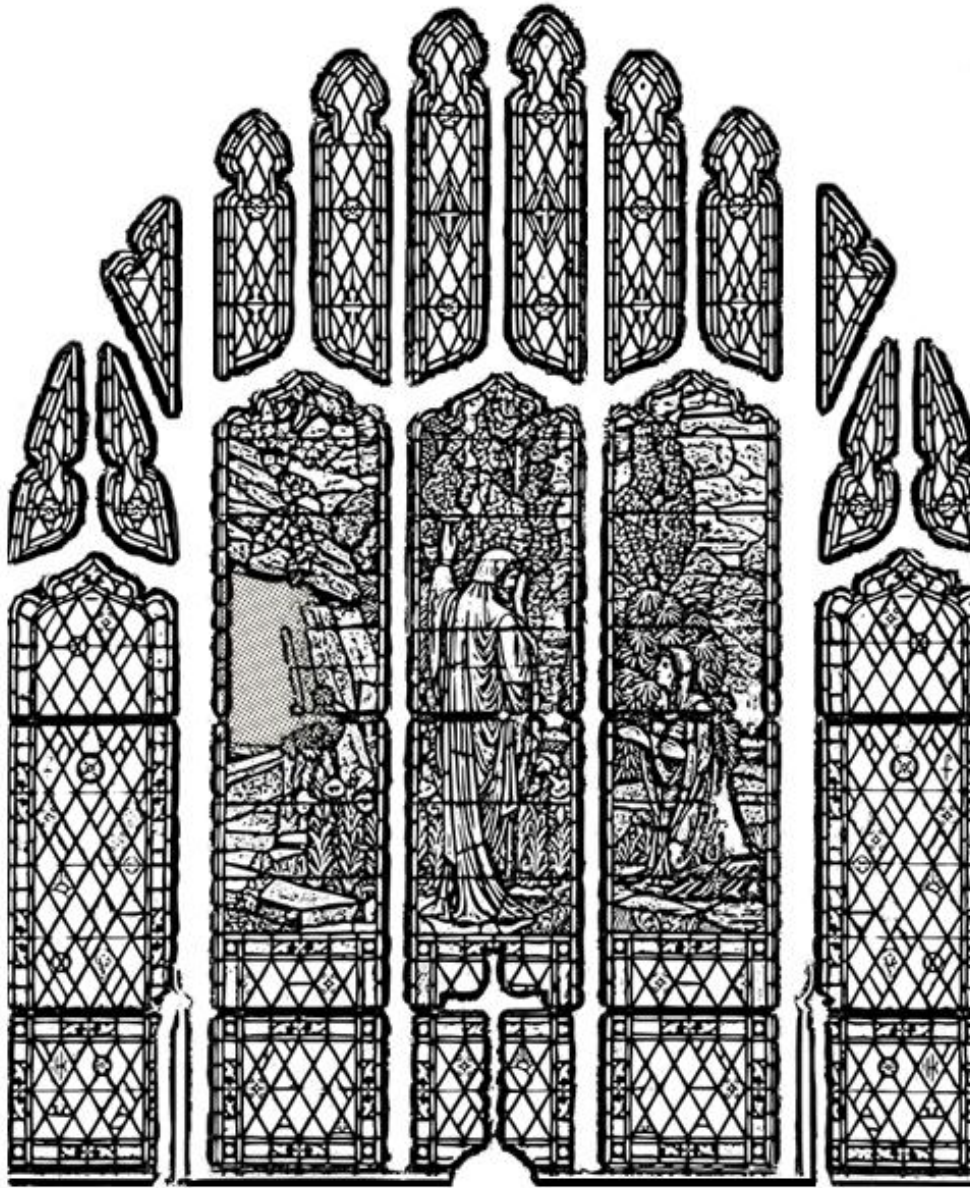


MT. LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Sunday, July 26, 2026, 8:30AM & 10:45AM

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

3319 WEST LIBERTY AVENUE ... PITTSBURGH, PA 15216 ... 412-531-7131

THE REV'D THOMAS Q. STRANDBURG, PASTOR ... tstrandburg@mlumc.org



Sunday, July 26, 2026 – The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

A "simile" is defined as a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g. as brave as a lion). This week's Gospel texts relay a series of "the kingdom of heaven is like" parables that were so crucial to Jesus' message. What does it mean to be Kingdom-like?

**Indicates an invitation to stand in spirit or posture, as able.*

The Prelude

O Great God

Hines, arr. Bock

***Opening Hymn**

"O Church of God, United"

UMH 547

*** The Greeting & Call to Worship**

✠ The Lord be with you.

✠ **And also with you.**

✠ We gather today in the midst of busy lives and nightmare headlines that mirror the disorder of the world around us.

✠ **We come to set our minds on the guidance of the Spirit.**

✠ We gather as people inundated with constant information, fast-moving news cycles, and ever-present alerts vying for our attention.

✠ **We come to set our minds on the guidance of the Spirit.**

✠ We gather as people seeking to anchor ourselves in the faith as the world around us is blown to and fro by waves of fear, scarcity, and reactivity.

✠ **We come to set our minds on the guidance of the Spirit.**

✠ Beloved, come. Come to find rest, grounding, and guidance in the Spirit who dwells in you.

✠ **We come to set our minds on the Spirit who guides us and draws us together toward life, peace, and flourishing. Amen.**

***Opening Prayer**

Said by all, with one voice.

You are the Creator of all that lives and breathes. You meet us this morning just as we are—with our joys and our burdens, our hopes and our fears, our faith and our doubts.

Open our hearts to your Holy Spirit. Quiet the many voices that compete for our attention, and help us to hear your voice above them all. Where we have chosen

worry instead of trust, resentment instead of forgiveness, or fear instead of hope,
lead us again into the abundant life you offer through Jesus Christ. Amen.

***Silent Prayer**

***Response**

“The Gift of Love”

UMH 408

Sacrament of Baptism (10:45)

UMH 39

Connor Jewell Whitefield

THE PASTOR baptizes the child, after which the baptismal liturgy concludes with the following question posed to the congregation, and the response which the people make together:

✠ Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life, and include this child now before you in your care?

✠ With God's help, we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround Connor Jewell with a community of love and forgiveness, that he may grow in his service to others. We will pray for him, that he may be a true disciple, who walks in the way that leads to life.

A Message for Young Disciples (10:45 am)

As the young disciples gather at the front of the church, all sing:

**This, this is where children belong, welcomed as part of the worshipping throng.
Water, God's word, bread and cup, prayer and song: This is where children belong.**

The young disciples (school-age children) then depart the sanctuary for Kids Praise. Teachers will lead them back to the sanctuary prior to the conclusion of the service. Nursery is available for younger children; please see an usher for directions.

The First Lesson

A Reading from Romans

ROMANS 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also

called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lector: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People: Thanks be to God.

***Hymn**

"Be Thou My Vision"

UMH 451

The Second Lesson

A Reading from Matthew

MATTHEW 13:31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to

them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

Lector: This is the word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

Said by all, with one voice.

**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, the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.**

The Sermon

"Kingdom L-I-K-E"

Pastor Strandburg

***The Affirmation of Faith**

UMH 882

All are invited to stand, in spirit or in posture, and to face the altar as the affirmation of faith is recited.

Pastor: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the one true church, apostolic and universal, whose holy faith let us now declare:

**All: I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again 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 Sign of Peace**

℣. The peace of Christ be with you.
℟. **And also with you.**

*The people are now invited to share signs of peace with their fellow members of Christ's body.
Extended conversation would ideally and most appropriately be reserved until the end of the service.*

Announcements

<i>At the Offertory</i>	<i>"Love"</i>	Peace & Martin, arr Schram
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*The Doxology & Prayer of Dedication	UMH 94
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*The Sending Hymn	"How Firm a Foundation"	UMH 529
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***The Dismissal**

℣. Let us bless the Lord.
℟. **Thanks be to God.**

***The Benediction & Recessional**

The people remain in place until the altar party has retired.

The Postlude	<i>To God Be the Glory</i>	Doane and Crosby, arr. Brock
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Prayer Concerns

The people of Venezuela, recovering after the recent earthquake.

Gayle Radnich, who received a recent diagnosis of a health condition.

Gary Henry, undergoing cancer treatment.

Norma Buhrman, enduring serious illness.

For those serving their country or community as first responders or in the armed forces, especially:

SPC **Russell Dale** - CPT **Shaun Hay** - LTC **Azizi Wesmiller** - LTC **Matthew Wesmiller**

2LT **Keith Cable** - LTC **Zachary Allen Finch** - CPL **Wyatt Hoover**

We pray for victims of violence in our nation and around the world.

*This week, we remember and pray for Christ's body throughout the world, especially remembering this week the church in **Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda.*** (Prayer Cycle of the World Council of Churches).

Leaders in Worship this Morning

ROB SPICHER (8:30AM) AND DONNA CHESLEIGH (10:45AM), LECTORS

MS. NANCY MCGILL, WORSHIP ACCOMPANIST

PASTOR THOMAS STRANDBURG, PREACHER

*The altar flowers this morning given
to the Glory of God and in honor of*

The dedication of our Youth in serving others.

*To provide flowers for a future service of worship,
please call the church office at 412-531-7131,
or use the form linked through the QR code below.*

