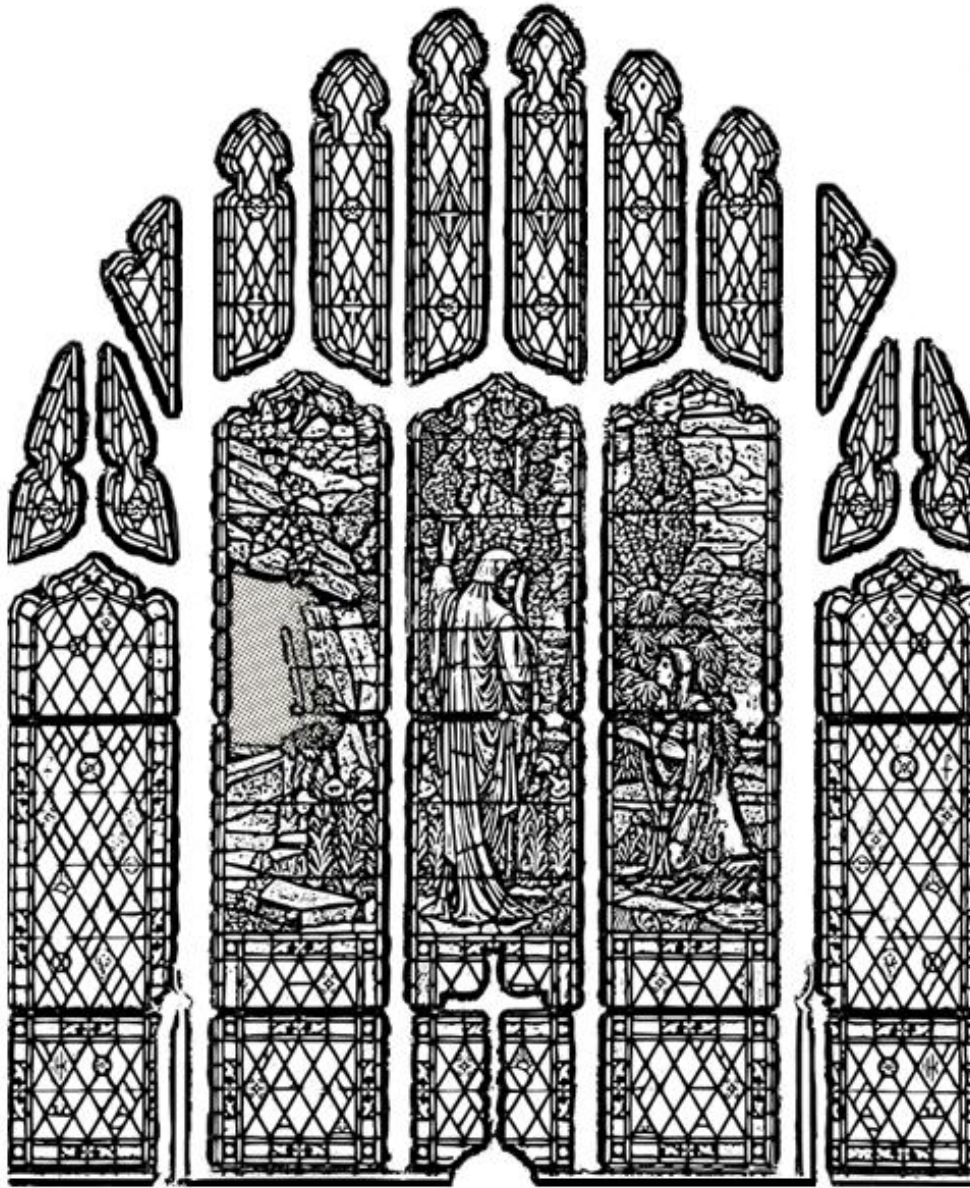


MT. LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Sunday, September 13, 2026, 8:30AM & 10:45AM

The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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

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



Sunday, September 13, 2026 – The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

John Wesley took seriously Jesus's invitation to 'be therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matt. 5:48). By 'perfection,' Wesley did not mean moral flawlessness or sinlessness. He meant perfection in the sense of maturity. Vision begins when God's people honestly assess reality and prayerfully imagine what could be.

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

The Prelude

"Prelude for a Joyful Occasion"

Edith Lang (1885-1969)

(No. 1 from *A Festival Suite*)

The Introit (10:45)

Introit on "Brother James' Air"

A.M.V. Stecker

Composed in memory of June & A. William Lowe; dedicated to their daughters, Betsy and Laurie.

World Premiere Performance

*How lovely is thy dwelling-place, O Lord of Hosts, to me!
My thirsty soul desires and longs within thy courts to be;
my very heart and flesh cry out, O living God, for thee.*

*Beside thine altars, gracious Lord, the swallows find a nest;
how happy they who dwell with thee and praise thee without rest,
and happy they whose hearts are set upon the pilgrim's quest.*

after Ps. 84

All rise, in body or spirit, at the sound of the chimes.

*Opening Hymn

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

UMH 384

* The Greeting & Call to Worship

✠ The Lord be with you.

✠ And also with you.

✠ We gather in God's presence today, acknowledging that none of us has arrived or reached perfection.

✠ We come just as we are, grateful that Christ Jesus has already taken hold of us.

✠ Forgetting what lies behind—our past mistakes, distractions, and failures—we lay down every burden at his feet.

✠ We strain forward to what lies ahead, clearing our minds and focusing our eyes entirely upon the Lord.

✠ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we press on toward the goal, worshiping God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

✠ May our lives pursue the ultimate prize: the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

***Opening Prayer**

Said by all, with one voice.

Lord, we ask that You cast a fresh, divine vision over this congregation. Open the eyes of our hearts so we may see where you are moving. Break down old boundaries, push past our comfort zones, and ignite a bold imagination within us. Unite us in purpose, breathe new life into our ministry, and give us a holy courage to take collective steps of faith. Let Your Holy Spirit lead us into a future filled with hope, transformation, and deep service to Your Kingdom. In your name we pray. Amen.

***Silent Prayer**

***Response**

"Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"

UMH 361

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 the Epistle to the Philippians

PHIL. 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have laid hold of it, but one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

***Hymn**

"I Surrender All"

UMH 354

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

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

"Going on to Perfection"

Rev. Strandburg

***The Affirmation of Faith**

UMH 882

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.

Announcements

At the Offertory

The Offertory Hymn (8:30 am) “Higher Ground”

See inserted on following page

The Anthem (10:45 am) *The Dream Isaiah Saw*

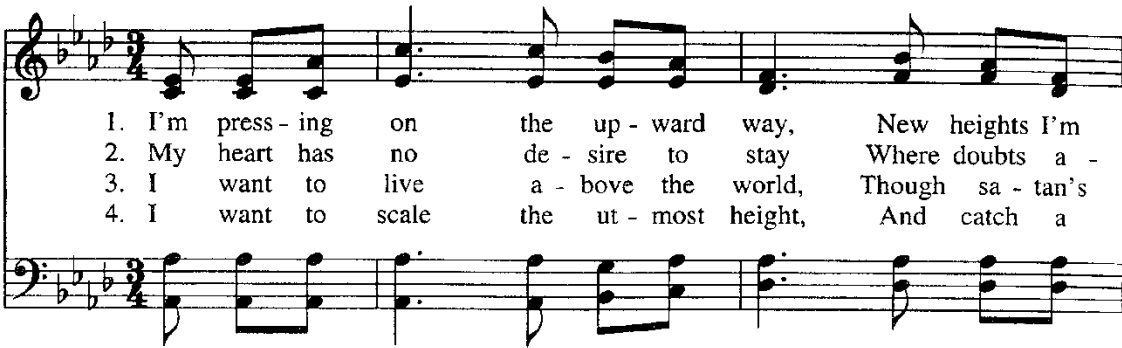
Glenn Rudolph (b.1951)

This anthem was composed in memory of those who perished on September 11, 2001.

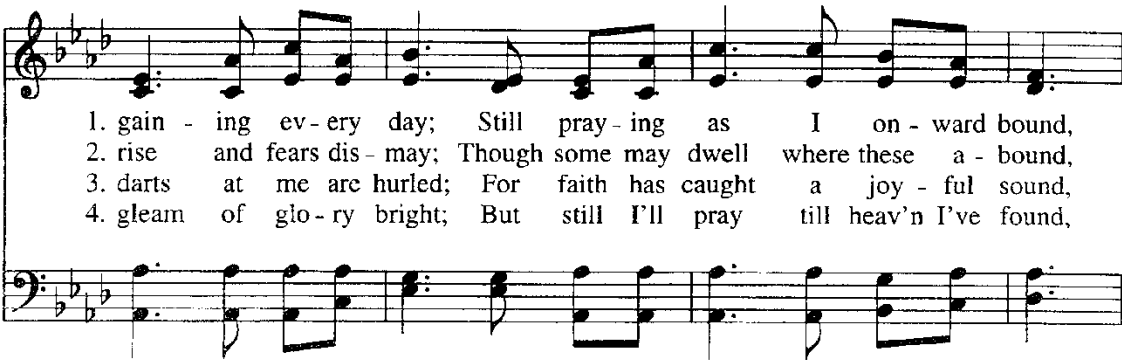
*Lions and oxen will sleep in the hay, leopards will join with the lambs as they play,
wolves will be pastured with cows in the glade, blood will not darken the Earth that God made.
Little child whose bed is straw, take new lodgings in my heart.
Bring the dream Isaiah saw: life redeemed from fang and claw.*

*Peace will pervade more than forest and field: God will transfigure the violence concealed
deep in the heart and in systems of gain, ripe for the judgment the Lord will ordain.
Little Child whose bed is straw, take new lodgings in my heart.
Bring the dream Isaiah saw: justice purifying law.*

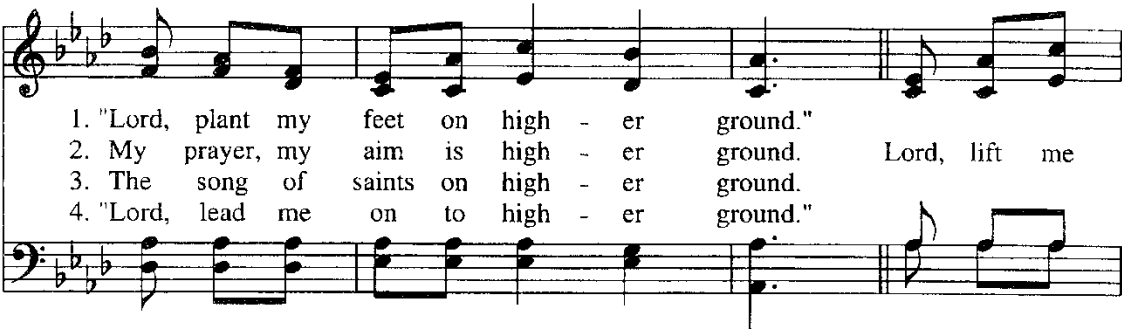
*Nature reordered to match God's intent, nations obeying the call to repent,
all of creation completely restored, filled with the knowledge and love of the Lord.
Little child whose bed is straw, take new lodgings in my heart.
Bring the dream Isaiah saw: knowledge, wisdom, worship, awe.*



1. I'm press - ing on the up - ward way, New heights I'm
 2. My heart has no de - sire to stay Where doubts a -
 3. I want to live a - bove the world, Though sa - tan's
 4. I want to scale the ut - most height, And catch a



1. gain - ing ev - ery day; Still pray - ing as I on - ward bound,
 2. rise and fears dis - may; Though some may dwell where these a - bound,
 3. darts at me are hurled; For faith has caught a joy - ful sound,
 4. gleam of glo - ry bright; But still I'll pray till heav'n I've found,



1. "Lord, plant my feet on high - er ground."
 2. My prayer, my aim is high - er ground. Lord, lift me
 3. The song of saints on high - er ground.
 4. "Lord, lead me on to high - er ground."



up, and let me stand By faith, on heav - en's ta - ble - land; A high - er



plane than I have found, Lord, plant my feet on high - er ground.

Words: Johnson Oatman, Jr. (1860-1948)
 Music: Charles H. Gabriel (1856-1932)

*The Dismissal

℣. Let us bless the Lord.

℟. Thanks be to God.

*The Benediction & Recessional

The Postlude

Festival Voluntary (Op. 87)

Flor Peeters (1903-1986)

Prayer Concerns

Mark Cerneskie, hospitalized with sepsis.

The family and loved ones of **Bette Lou Reichard**, who recently passed away.

Joyce Campbell, sister of Nancy Marshall, struggling with ongoing health issues.

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

For our **UMC Friends and Partners in Ministry in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia**, facing anxieties resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war.

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 **Ghana and Nigeria**. (*Prayer Cycle of the World Council of Churches*).

Please remember the special concerns of those in our community and throughout our world in your personal prayer life throughout the week. If you wish to solicit prayers from the congregation for any matter (health, travel, special concerns, etc.), please contact the church office to have your concern added to the prayer list.

A Music Note

This week, the music commemorates several events in our common life. Firstly, we celebrate the return of worship to our beloved sanctuary with festive music for the prelude and postlude, and an introit especially written for the occasion. The introit, upon the text of Psalm 84 ("How lovely is thy dwelling place") was composed over the summer in memory of June and Bill Lowe; this morning is its world premiere performance. As a second observance, the choral anthem this morning remembers the victims of the attacks on September 11. The piece, "The Dream Isaiah Saw", was composed by Allison Park-based composer Glenn Rudolph in 2001, and dedicated to those lost to the violence of that day. The anthem, a poetic reimagining of the Prophet Isaiah's words by 20th century hymn writer Thomas Troeger, speaks of a world where "leopards will join with the lambs as they play" and "peace will pervade more than forest and field": a vision that embodies our prayer for harmony and unity among the world's peoples on the 25th anniversary of this national tragedy.

Leaders in Worship this Morning

AGNES ALEXANDER AND TEDDY ALEXANDER, ACOLYTES

ALAN CHESLEIGH, CROSS BEARER

PAULETTE COLONNA (8:30AM) AND LIZZIE DILLER (10:45AM), LECTORS

THE CHOIR OF THE MT. LEBANON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MR. A. MITCHELL V. STECKER, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & LITURGY

THE REV'D THOMAS Q. STRANDBURG, SENIOR PASTOR

*The roses on the altar this morning given by
John, Donna and Shannon College
to the Glory of God and in loving memory of
Johnathan Heath College*

*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.*

