St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
September 20, 2026
17th Sunday after Pentecost

Our Vision
Love and serve God by walking with, caring for,
and learning from our members, friends, and neighbors.

Our Values
Welcome. Generosity. Faithfulness.

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.

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly speaks or *sings* the **bold** responses.

GATHERING
The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Confession and Forgiveness ELW page 94

Gathering Song ELW hymn 583

"Take My Life, That I May Be"

Greeting

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

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual lovingkindness to us your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

Children's Word

First Reading Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 48

Jonah 3:10-4:11

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

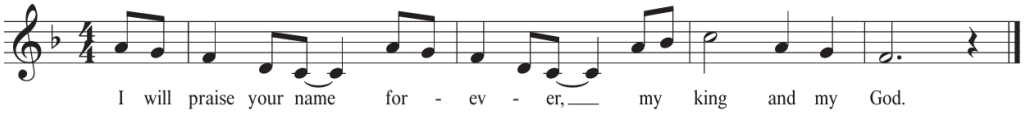
At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 145:1-8

A soloist sings the refrain first. All repeat and sing as indicated (R)



[1] I will exalt you, my God and king,
and bless your name forever and ever.

[2]Every day will I bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

[3]Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!
There is no end to your greatness.

[4]One generation shall praise your works to another
and shall declare your power. R

[5]I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty
and all your marvelous works.

[6]They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts,
and I will recount your greatness.

[7] They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

[8]The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. R

Second Reading Pew Bible: New Testament Page 163

Philippians 1:21-30

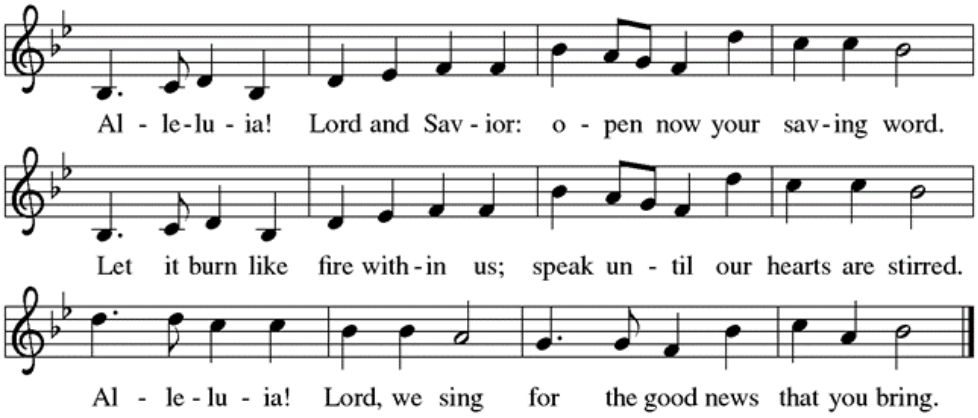
Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Reading Pew Bible: New Testament Page 20

Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day ELW hymn 574

"Here I Am, Lord"

Installation of Vicar Allison Klein

Following the presentation:

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork.

Teach us your ways, O God.

Take knowledge rather than gold,
for all that you may desire cannot compare with wisdom.

Teach us your ways, O God.

Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Teach us your ways, O God.

Following the prayer and address to Vicar Allison:

People of God,
will you accompany, encourage, and uphold Allison in prayer, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?

We will, and we ask God to help us.

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:
Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

At the conclusion:
Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.

Offering Hymn ELW hymn 587

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

Offering Prayer

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

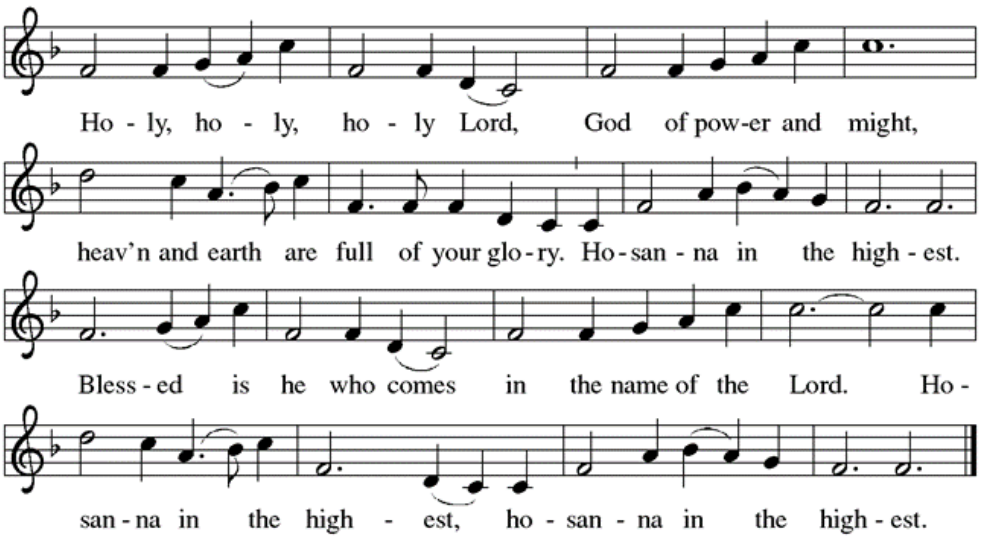
Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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



Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. . .
. . . Blessed are you, Lord our God:

Blessed are you, Lord our God.

You fulfilled your covenant with us in Jesus . . .
. . . Blessed are you, Lord our God:

Blessed are you, Lord our God.

For us he lived, for us he died, for us he rose to eternal life.

On the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

We hear his call, we repent our ways,
and we enter with joy into the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you, Lord our God:

Blessed are you, Lord our God.

Send your Holy Spirit here on your gathered disciples . .
. . . Blessed are you, Lord our God:

Blessed are you, Lord our God.

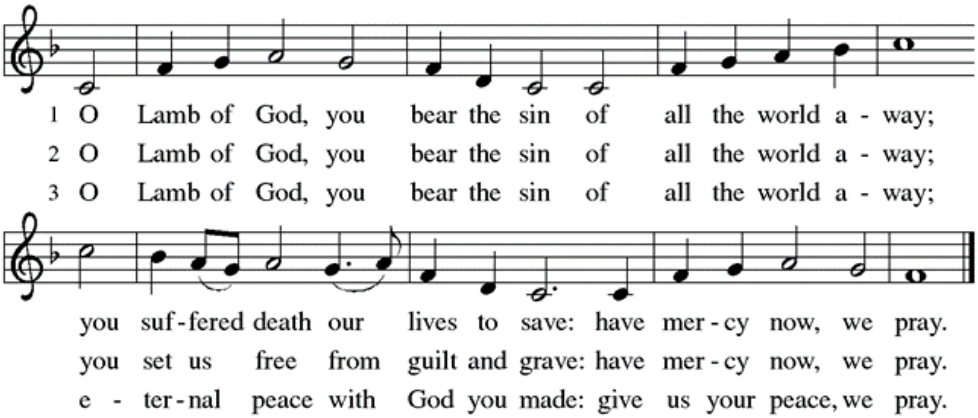
Blessed are you, Lord our God . . .

. . . We worship you and sing our praises,
today and to the end of the age.
Amen.

Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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.



Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:
The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond:

Amen.

Communion Song

"We Come to the Hungry Feast" ELW hymn 479

"Here Is Bread" ELW hymn 483

Prayer After Communion

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Announcements

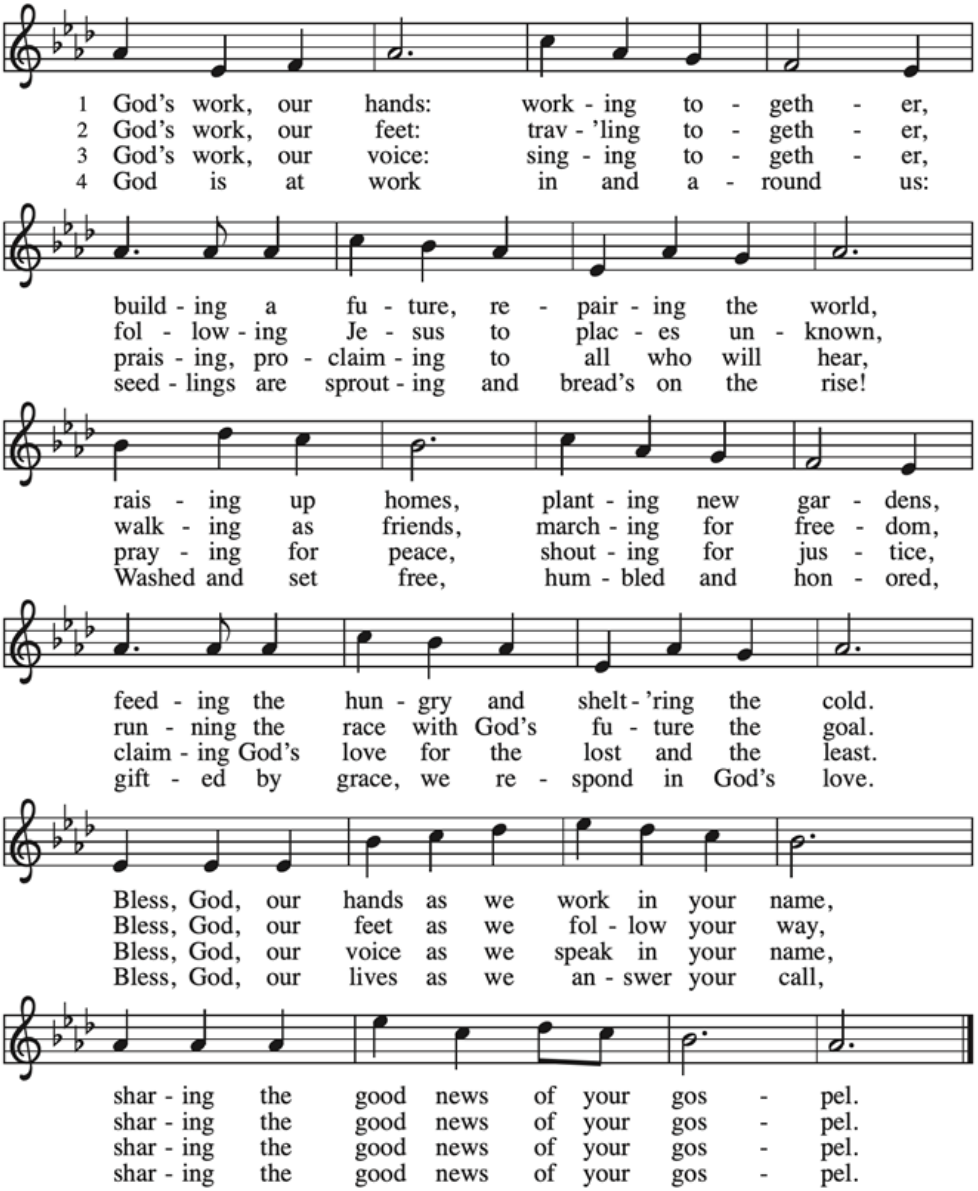
Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

"God's Work, Our Hands"



Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Nelson Wesley Trout, bishop, died 1996 (TFF)
Sunday, September 20, 2026
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.

Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist
Monday, September 21, 2026
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.

GOSPEL MESSAGE
Scandalous Grace

Jesus loved to tell strange, unsettling stories to illustrate God's grace. Theologians and biblical scholars have wrestled with the parables of Jesus for centuries, trying to make them make sense. But perhaps the beauty of these strange illustrations is that they refuse to succumb to our need for logic or neat conclusions. They are wild, confusing, and often scandalous—much like God's love for God's people.

This parable is one such story that has the power to offend us with its backward-seeming logic. A landowner who keeps inviting new laborers to join the workforce, paying them the same amount for different amounts of work? To be sure, this is not a commentary on how to run a business or abide by fair labor practices. Instead, it is a reminder of the outrageousness of God's kingdom or reign and the scandal of God's grace.

The kingdom of God functions by its own rules: It is a table where there is always room for more people, and an endless supply of bread and wine. It is a font where all are welcome, where all are invited to splash in the waters of baptism and be named children of God. It is a realm where our rules of space and time no longer apply, as we enter into ancient story and liturgy alongside the saints who have come before us. It is a sanctuary where we find the courage to confess our sins and receive God's extravagant, scandalous forgiveness. It is a community where love and justice supersede force and greed. It is a safe place where the most vulnerable are the most cared for, and generosity abounds so that all have enough. And it is a kingdom where all are invited to participate. Much like how the landowner hired new laborers until the end of the day, it's never too late to be welcomed by God's mercy!