

St. John's Lutheran Church
Biggerstaff Christian Retreat Center
9 am Worship Service
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 6, 2026

"FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE



**GATHERED
IN MY NAME,
I AM THERE AMONG THEM."**

MATTHEW 18:20, NRSV

Welcome!

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.

Welcome to Worship!

PRE-GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG *"Be the Center"*

Jesus be the center
Be my source be my light
Jesus

Jesus be the center
Be my hope be my song
Jesus

Refrain
Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live
Jesus, Jesus

Jesus be my vision
Be my path be my guide
Jesus. *Refrain*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth. **Amen.**

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

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. **Amen.**

OPENING SONG

“Step by Step”

Oh God, You are my God
And I will ever praise You
Oh God, You are my God
And I will ever praise You

I will seek You in the morning
And I will learn to walk in Your ways
And step by step You'll lead me
And I will follow You all of my days
{Repeat}

Last time:

I will follow you all of my days
And, I will follow you all of my days
And step by step You'll lead me
And I will follow You all of my days

THE APOSTOLIC 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.**

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: 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. **Amen.**

YOUTH MESSAGE

Adriana McMurphy

THE LITANY OF LABOR (*see insert*)

Adriana McMurphy

THE FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-11

⁷ So 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. ⁸ If 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. ⁹ But 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. ¹⁰ Now 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?” ¹¹ Say 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?

Psalm 119:33-40— *Read Responsively*

³³ Teach 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.**

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

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

³⁷ Turn 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.**

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

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

THE SECOND READING

Romans 13:8-14

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The 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, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Please stand for the reading of the Gospel.

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Thy Word” (2x)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.



THE GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵“If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, 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 that person 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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

THE MESSAGE

Pastor Rachel Connelly

SONG OF RESPONSE

“We Are Called”

Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God.

Refrain
We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly;
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.

Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless
so all hatred and blindness will be no more. *Refrain*

Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love. *Refrain*



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. 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 PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

After each prayer petition— Hear us, O God, **Your mercy is great.**

THE SHARING OF CHRIST'S PEACE

Pastor: The peace of Christ be with you always. **Congregation: And also with you.**

THE OFFERING

*Our gifts and offerings are gathered for the mission of the church.
Plates are passed by the ushers.*

THE OFFERTORY SONG

"We Are an Offering"

We lift our voices, we lift our hands,
We lift our lives up to You: we are an offering.
Lord, use our voices, Lord, use our hands,
Lord, use our lives they are Yours: we are an offering

All that we have, all that we are,
all that we hope to be, we give to You, we give to You.
We lift our voices, we lift our hands,
we lift our lives up to you: we are an offering,
we are an offering.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Assisting: 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. **Amen.**

THE MEAL

All are welcome at the table of communion

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

COMMUNION SONGS

"Sanctuary/I Exalt Thee Medley"

Lord prepare me, to be a sanctuary
Pure and Holy, tried and true.
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for You.

I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee O Lord
I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee, I exalt Thee O Lord

Holy Spirit, fill this vessel
Make my heart to, burn within
Purify me, make my life be
A sanctuary for You.

"Christ Our Peace" (sing 3x)

Christ, our peace,
you break down the walls that divide us;
Christ, our peace,
come, make us one body in you.



THE PASTORAL BLESSING

THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Assisting: 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. **Amen.**

THE BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

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

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

The God of grace ☩ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**



Serving Today



Pastor:

Lay Assistant:

Lector:

Greeters:

Musicians:

Videographer:

Serving Today

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Connelly

Cathy Plowden

Lynn Pode

Scot & Linda Williams

Tom Ward, Ray Burroughs and Dave Devoe

Jason Dickard

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SENDING SONG

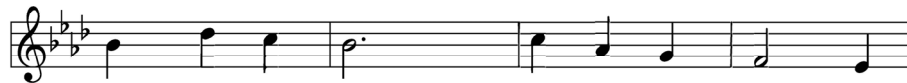
"God's Work Our Hands"



1 God's work, our hands: work - ing to - geth - er,
 2 God's work, our feet: trav - 'ling to - geth - er,
 3 God's work, our voice: sing - ing to - geth - er,
 4 God is at work in and a - round us:



build - ing a fu - ture, re - pair - ing the world,
 fol - low - ing Je - sus to plac - es un - known,
 prais - ing, pro - claim - ing to all who will hear,
 seed - lings are sprout - ing and bread's on the rise!



rais - ing up homes, plant - ing new gar - dens,
 walk - ing as friends, march - ing for free - dom,
 pray - ing for peace, shout - ing for jus - tice,
 Washed and set free, hum - bled and hon - ored,



feed - ing the hun - gry and shelt - 'ring the cold.
 run - ning the race with God's fu - ture the goal.
 claim - ing God's love for the lost and the least.
 gift - ed by grace, we re - spond in God's love.



Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
 Bless, God, our feet as we fol - low your way,
 Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
 Bless, God, our lives as we an - swer your call,



shar - ing the good news of your Gos - pel.

THE DISMISSAL

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

Thanks be to God.

Our Church Family

Sandy Yuda, healing (AnMed Rehab)
Libby McLean, healing
Wilma Cobb, healing
Gary Cabbage, healing
Michael Pode, healing
Deb Blackmore, healing
Andrea Carlson, healing
Stephanie Jackson, healing
Chris Radford, healing
Tina Barrett, healing
Tiffany Chapman, healing
Charlie (health) & Debbie (lung cancer) Busch

Those Grieving

The family of Betty Mantell
The family of George Rogers (brother of Micky Ward)
The family of Caren von Hippel (BabyRead)

Our Elders at Home or Assisted Living

Andera Stroud, Foothills
Thelma Miller, The Residences (Wells Highway)
Brenda Cantrell, home
Linda Humphries, home
Frances Carter, home/hospice
Marie Palmatier, home
Lynne Williams (Pawleys Island)

Other Prayer Concerns

For those affected by the flooding in Nepal & China and in the Grand Canyon.
For those affected by earthquakes in Japan & Columbia.
For those affected by military actions in the Middle East.
For our country amidst on-going nationwide violence.
For wisdom for military leaders involved in the events unfolding in the Middle East.
For those dealing with loss from recent natural disasters and severe weather.
For all those who have lost their jobs due to recent government changes.
For peace for our country and protection for our government officials.
For colleges & universities across our country.
For those dealing with loss and fear from gun violence.
For peace in the Middle East, and comfort to those impacted by violence.
For Bishop Wade Roof and Synod staff
All military Personnel



Our Extended Family and Friends

Archie Yusef, tests (great nephew of Sandra Pruitt)
Kyle Hollandsworth, job search (grandson of Millie)
Charlotte Eaker, breast cancer (sister-in-law of Ann Brackett)
Valarie Bentley (infant) hole in heart (Tina Barrett)
Mary Jane Rees, healing (mother of Rod Rees)
Bobbie Williams, hospice (aunt of Jan Day)
Susan Ward, cancer (daughter of Joan Lewis)
Barbara Williams, hospice (mother of Cathy Plowden)
Jon Fowler, brain cancer (cousin of Wilson's)
Jean Deal, healing (sister-in-law of McLean's)
Joan Kramer, successful treatment (friend of Williams')
Riley Medlin, cancer diagnosis (WHS student)
Kathy Quickel, healing (mother of Mike Goynes)
Doug Scanlon, healing (friend of Grace Schmeelcke)
Maggie Ormes, healing (friend of Mary Sprouse)
Barbara Cary, comfort (sister of Dave Devoe)
Buffy McCarthy, healing (daughter-in-law Kathy Scherter)
Stephanie Williams, cancer/chemo (cousin/ Pastor Rachel)
Kathy Smith, liver cancer (cousin of Cathy Plowden)
Isabel Fogel, healing (granddaughter of Fogel's)
Dwight Amick, hospice (Stephanie Champion, step dad)
Danny Childress, comfort (nephew of Safrin's)
Larry Smith, (friend of Jane Harris)
Bonnie Blanchett, healing (mother of Ryan Raab)
E. Christian Gauderer, hospitalized in Lisbon, Portugal (brother of Michael)
Janelle Gibson, healing (aunt of Jan Day)
Erica McKee Skinner, healing (friend of Tina Barrett)
Ben Harding, healing (brother of Allen Harding)
Chad Cobb (son of Wilma)
Kay Davis, recovery (mother of Stephanie Champion)
Kelsey Bowman, healing (daughter-in-law of Bowmans)
Lauren Bowman, Lyme disease (daughter of Gary and Barb Bowman)
Jacquelyn Moore, (niece of Kathy Scherter)
Bennie Smith, health (nephew of Wards)
Dohnvan (grandson of Kathy Scherter)
Dolorico Perez (father of Josie Perez)
Gina Daly, health (daughter of Bob Johnson)

Please let the church office know of any updates to our prayer list.



The Bell Tower— Ministry News



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

The church office will be closed on **Monday, September 7** in observance of Labor Day. It will reopen on Tuesday.



MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Monday Evening Bible study is at 6pm. We are studying the book of Proverbs. Contact Adriana with any questions.



TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Tuesday Bible Study on EZRA, beginning September 8 at 11am in the Sanctuary - Come share in a discovery of the Book of Ezra, which tells a story of rebuilding and renewal for God's people. This powerful Old Testament text speaks directly to what it means to rebuild community, restore faith, and navigate major life transitions after a period of exile and disruption. Whether you are a lifelong Bible reader or picking up the Scriptures for the very first time, your voice and perspective are welcome at the table.



ALL AGES BINGO

On **Sunday, September 13** at noon there will be "All Ages Bingo" in the Fellowship Hall. Gloria Shealy Circle will be providing a simple lunch. Prizes will be available for children, teens and adults. Contact Adriana with any questions.



JESUS BY THE LAKE

On **Sunday, September 27**, we are hosting our first "*Jesus by the Lake*" at Biggerstaff from 4-6pm. This is a new, "holy experiment," collaborating with the youth and families from University Lutheran, to be every fourth Sunday of the month. The theme of the day will be "*Who is my Neighbor?*" and the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is an exciting opportunity for the entire family (children, teens, AND adults) to come together, see old and new faces, and make new friendships in a new way of doing faith formation. Games, music, small group discussions, and food are all included. Contact Adriana to learn more about this exciting new event.



CHURCH OFFICE STAFF

St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

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Email: stjohnsadriana@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant—Melissa Rasley

(864) 638-6363 or Email: stjohnsluther@gmail.com

Office Hours: Monday—Friday 8:30am to 1:00pm

Additional St. John's Staff

Ray Burroughs, Facilities Manager

Joan Lewis, Spiritual Gifts Coordinator

Cathy Plowden, Congregational President

Ways to Help with the Disaster in Nepal

Below are three options if you wish to help those affected by the flooding in Nepal.

Lutheran World Relief: <https://give.lwr.org/page/199466/donate/1>

Water Mission: <https://watermission.org/nepal-flooding-disaster-response>

Lutheran Disaster Response: <https://give.elca.org/page/88370/donate/1>

Our tithes and offerings are an important part of our faith journey.

- Electronic offerings may be given through the GIVELIFY app.
- You may also go to our website: www.stjohnswalhalla.org and click on the "Give Now With Givelify" button
- Another option is to scan this QR code to go directly to our Givelify page.

