

St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

Walhalla, South Carolina
11 am Worship Service

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 13, 2026



*"...how often should
I forgive?
"Not SEVEN times,
but, I tell you,
SEVENTY-
SEVEN
times."*

Matthew 18:21-22, NRSV

Welcome!

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.

Welcome to Worship!

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE GATHER

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 HYMN

“Come, We That Love the Lord”

ELW 625

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.



KYRIE

ELW 157

Leader

In peace, in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Assembly

Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have

For the reign of God, and for

mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

peace through - out the world, for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the

Lord. For your

Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

peo - ple here who have come to give you praise, for the strength to live your

word, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have

Help, save, and de - fend us, O God.

mer - cy. A - men.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

YOUTH MESSAGE

Adriana McMurphy

THE FIRST READING

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵ Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Psalm 103:1-13— *Read Responsively*

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

² **Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits—**

³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases;

⁴ **who redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;**

⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

⁶ **O LORD, you provide vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.**

⁷ You made known your ways to Moses and your works to the children of Israel.

⁸ **LORD, you are full of compassion and mercy,**

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;

⁹ you will not always accuse us, nor will you keep your anger forever.

¹⁰ **You have not dealt with us according to our sins,**

nor repaid us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,

so great is your steadfast love for those who fear you.

¹² **As far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed our transgressions from us.**

¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear you, O LORD.

THE SECOND READING

Romans 14:1-12

¹ Welcome those who are weak in faith but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.

² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on slaves of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall.

And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord. Also those who eat, eat for the Lord, since they give thanks to God, while those who abstain, abstain for the Lord and give thanks to God.⁷ For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.¹¹ For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."¹² So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

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

Please stand for the reading of the Gospel

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia!

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21-35

²¹ Peter came and said to [Jesus,] "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves." ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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

THE SERMON

Pastor Rachel Connelly

HYMN OF RESPONSE

“Where Charity and Love Prevail”

ELW 359

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 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.

ANTHEM:

“Dona Nobis Pacem”

arr by: Hal Hopson

St. John’s Chancel Choir

THE OFFERTORY SONG

“The Doxology”

ELW 884

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise him all creatures here below.
Praise him above ye heavn’ly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

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

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

ELW pg. 152

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

Congregation: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Congregation: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER/WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

ELW pg. 154

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.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

All of God's people who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord are invited to His table for Holy Communion. Those who are not communing are invited to receive a blessing from the Pastor; please indicate this with folded hands. We have gluten-free wafers available.

Please let Pastor Rachel know your preference.

The ushers will guide you as we practice continuous communion

We kneel or stand at the communion rail.



Please join us in singing the communion hymns.

COMMUNION HYMNS

"Lamb of God"

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;
have mer - cy on us, have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;
have mer - cy on us, have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us peace, grant us peace.

"As We Gather at Your Table"

ELW 522

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.**

THE SENDING HYMN

“Lift High the Cross”

ELW 660

THE DISMISSAL

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE



Serving Today



in Worship

Serving Today in Worship

Pastor: The Reverend Dr. Rachel Connelly
Assisting: Adriana McMurphy
Lector: John Hewell
Choir Director/Accompanist: John Fallon
Interim Organist: Grace Lichtenwald
Greeters/Ushers: Ryan & Christy Raab
Altar Guild: Martha Murtiashaw

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 Safrit'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



ALL AGES BINGO

TODAY 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.



Betty Mantell Memorial Service

There will be a Memorial Service for Betty Mantell in the Sanctuary on **Monday, September 14 at 10:30 am**. A reception will follow in the Fellowship Hall.



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 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.



The altar flowers this week are given by Judy Beck to the glory of God, and in memory of her husband Bob's 84th birthday.



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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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.

