

St. John's Lutheran Church
Biggerstaff Christian Retreat Center
9 am Worship Service
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 2026



Welcome!

As Solomon prays for wisdom, we seek to more deeply know the treasures of faith. In today's gospel Jesus offers everyday images that reveal to us the reign of God: a tree that becomes a sheltering home, yeast that penetrates and expands, a treasured pearl, a net that gains a great catch. Even as we seek the riches of God's reign, the great surprise is that God's grace finds us first!

Welcome to Worship!

PRE-GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

GATHERING SONG *“More Precious Than Silver”*

Lord, you are more precious than silver.
Lord, you are more costly than gold.
Lord, you are more beautiful than diamonds,
And nothing I desire compares with you.

Lord, Your love is wide as the ocean.
Lord, Your love is deep as the sea.
Lord, Your love encompasses the nations,
And that is all I want to live in me. *(Repeat verse 1)*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose compassion endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin to God.

Compassionate God,

we confess to you all our sins. Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” In the name of God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. Rest in God’s love.

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

Text: Beaker, Music: Beaker; arr Nylea Butler-Moore
Text and music c 1991 BMG Songs, Inc. and Kid Brother of St. Frank Publishing

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: Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

YOUTH MESSAGE

Adriana McMurphy



THE FIRST READING

1 Kings 3:5-12

⁵ At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” ⁶ And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you, and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷ And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹ Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?” ¹⁰ It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹ God said to him, “Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or for the life of your enemies but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹² I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you.”

Psalm 119:129-136— *Read Responsively*

¹²⁹ Your decrees are wonderful; therefore I obey them with all my heart.

¹³⁰ **When your word is opened it gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.**

¹³¹ I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments.

¹³² **Turn to me and be gracious to me, as you always do to those who love your name.**

¹³³ Order my footsteps in your word; let no iniquity have dominion over me.

¹³⁴ **Rescue me from those who oppress me, and I will keep your commandments.**

¹³⁵ Let your face shine upon your servant and teach me your statutes.

¹³⁶ **My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your teaching**

THE SECOND READING

Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² 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? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ 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. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ 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.

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 13:31-33, 44-52

³¹ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³² 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.” ³³ 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.”

⁴⁴ “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. ⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ “Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵² 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.”

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

THE MESSAGE

Pastor Rachel Connelly

SONG OF RESPONSE

“Seek Ye First”

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
And its righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you;
Seek and you shall find;
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you.
Allelu, Alleluia

We do not live by bread alone,
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God.
Allelu, Alleluia

Refrain

Text: Matthew 6:33, 7:7; adapt. Karen Lafferty, b. 1948
Music: LAFFERTY, Karen Lafferty, b. 1948

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— God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

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: Loving God, we offer at your table the gifts of our hearts. Help us take heart in you and share freely of your love, so that all creation can taste your abundance. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit abiding with us now and forever. **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"

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

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

"Come to the Table of Mercy"

Come to the table of mercy, prepared with the wine and the bread.
All who are hungry and thirsty, come, and your souls will be fed.
Come at the Lord's invitation; receive from his nail-scarred hand.
Eat of the bread of salvation; drink of the blood of the Lamb.

THE PASTORAL BLESSING

THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Assisting: Compassionate God, through the gifts of bread and wine our hearts are filled with the abundance of your love. Strengthen us that we, through this holy meal, may share your love freely, as you have shared with us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit nourishing us now and forever. **Amen.**

THE BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, ☩ one God, bless, heal, and hold you today and always.
Amen.

SENDING SONG

“Be Thou My Vision”

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought by day and by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul’s shelter, thou my high tower,
raise thou me heav’nward, O Pow’r of my pow’r.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always:
thou, and thou only, first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Light of my soul, after victory won,
may I reach heaven’s joys, O heaven’s Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Text: Irish, 8th-10th cent.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt

THE DISMISSAL

Heaven has come near. Go, share the good news!
Thanks be to God.

Serving Today



in Worship

Pastor:

Lay Assistant:

Lector:

Greeters:

Musicians:

Serving Today

The Rev. Dr. Rachel Connelly

Jan Long

Torrie Landon

Jeff & Torrie Landon

Ray Burroughs, Tom Ward, Dave Devoe & Sadie Thatcher

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Our Church Family

Gary Cabbage, healing
 Chris Radford, healing
 John Fallon, healing
 Tina Barrett, healing
 Andera Stroud, Foothills
 Jerry Cobb, healing/home
 Tiffany Chapman, healing
 Katie Johns, home, healing
 Charlie (health) & Debbie (lung cancer) Busch

**Those Grieving**

The family of Jeanne Welch
 The family of Brock Jackson, (friends of Lattimore's)

Our Elders at Home or Assisted Living

Betty Mantell, Lila Doyle
 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 earthquakes in Venezuela.
 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 Ginny Aebischer and Synod staff
 All military Personnel

Our Extended Family and Friends

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)
 Joe & Peggy Dilworth, healing (brother & sister-in-law of Barbara Wilson)
 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)
 Billy Joe Lindley, healing (friend of Kents)
 Barbara Cary, comfort (sister of Dave Devoe)
 Teresa Newton, healing (friend of Kents)
 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)
 George Rogers, lung cancer (half brother of Micky)
 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



Back to School Bash

TODAY from 4-6pm, we will be having our **Back to School Bash** at Biggerstaff, rain or shine. We will have food, frozen treats, outdoor games, a pinata and a service project! Families and friends are invited. Contact Adriana with any questions.

St. John's Meetup and Connect

Every Wednesday in July at Biggerstaff - 5pm-8pm



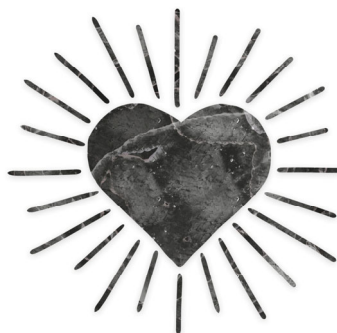
MIDWEEK DIP AND DIVE - We are opening up Biggerstaff Retreat to the community every Wednesday in July from 5-8pm. BYO chairs, blanket, food and non-alcoholic drink, floats, etc. Because there is no lifeguard on duty, an adult 18+ must be present to swim. Life jackets are available. Event will be cancelled during inclement weather.

Email meetupandconnect@gmail.com for further information

School Supplies Collection



The Gloria Shealy Circle will be collecting school supplies for Oconee County students **during the month of July**. There will be collection boxes at Biggerstaff and at the church. Any new school supplies will be accepted: notebooks, notebook paper, pens, pencils, crayons, glue sticks, rulers, index cards, composition books, spiral bound notebooks, calculators, notebook index tabs, report folders, etc. **The last day for donations will be Sunday, August 2.**





CHURCH
OFFICE
STAFF

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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

WELCOME TO
church

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.

