

**Sixteenth Sunday
after Pentecost
God's Work Our Hands
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
September 13, 2026
Sunday 10:00 a.m.**



**God's work.
Our hands.**

Welcome to All! We are glad that you are able to worship with us today. **Please fill out a connection card in the pews if you like.** During the service, we will sit or stand in reverence to our Lord. Please do what is physically comfortable and reverent for you. For those who are unable to receive Communion near the altar and wish to have the Pastor administer it at your seat, please obtain a red and white card from one of the ushers and hold it up at Communion time to alert the Pastor. If you or a little one would like to receive a blessing instead of Holy Communion, we invite you to come forward and cross your arms at the time of Communion. Please feel free to introduce yourself to our Pastor and fill in your name, address, etc in the guest book near the entrance to the sanctuary.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship – Setting 3, page 138

Pre-Worship Music/Announcements

Prelude

GATHERING

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

C: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate God,

C: ... 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.

P: 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.
C: Amen.

Gathering Hymn *God's Work. Our Hands* ELW 731

Greeting

A: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. C: **And also with you.**

Kyrie (lead by Pastor Paul)

S 138

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

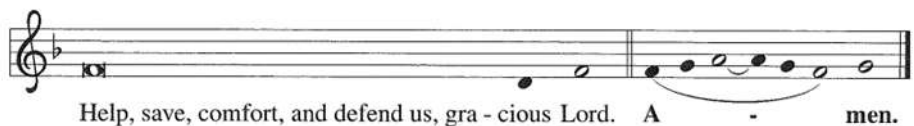
For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

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let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.

A - men.

Hymn of Praise

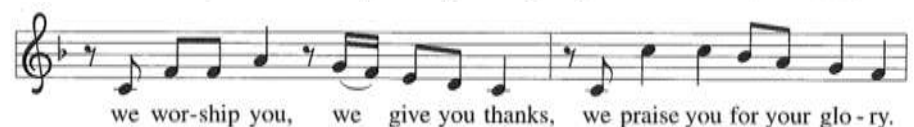
Glory to God



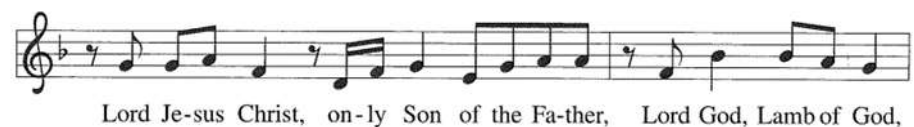
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



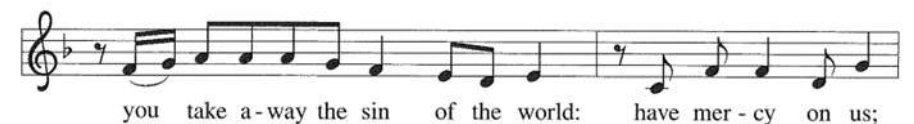
Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther,



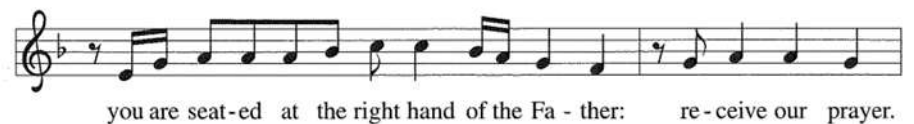
we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



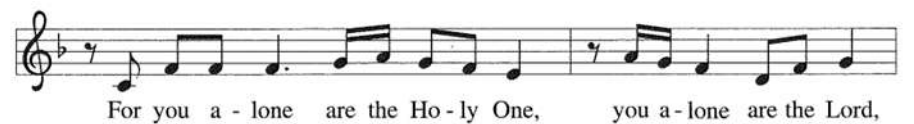
Lord Je-sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,



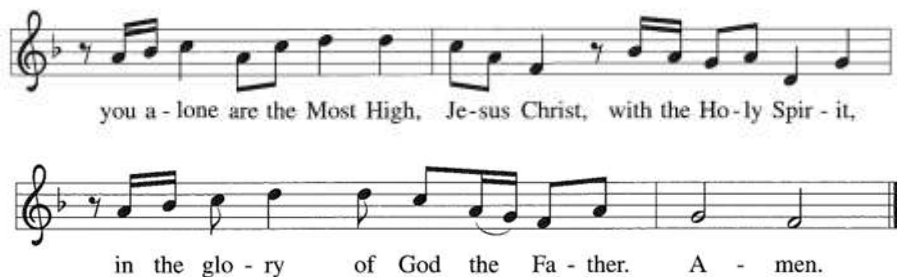
you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer - cy on us;



you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.



For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



Prayer of the Day

A: The Lord be with you. C: And also with you.

A: Let us pray together... C: **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.**

Children's Message

Blessing of the Backpacks

Pr. Paul

WORD

First Lesson

Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

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.

L: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

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

Second Lesson

Romans 14:1-12

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

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.

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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.

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia



Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

C: ...Glory to you, O Lord...

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.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Apostle's Creed

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and 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.

Prayers of Intercession: response after each petition: **"Your mercy is great."** (*Before prayer*) A: Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us. (*Conclusion*) P: Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name. **C: Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

MEAL

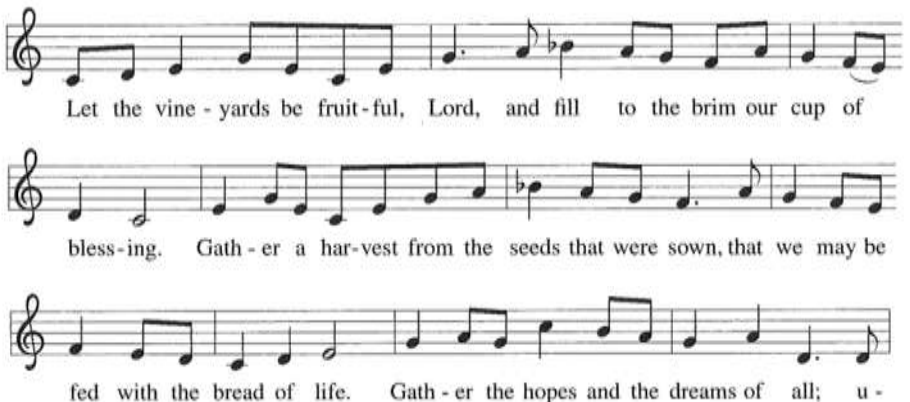
Offering

(*Please be seated.*)

Offering Song:

Zeke Clemons

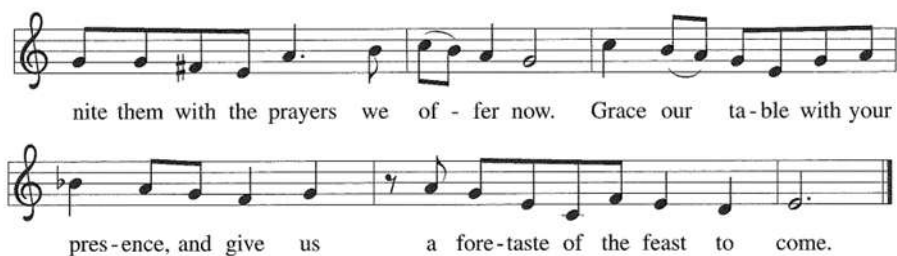
Offertory (*Please stand, as able.*) ***Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful***



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of

bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be

fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



Offering Prayer

A: Let us pray together.

C: 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.

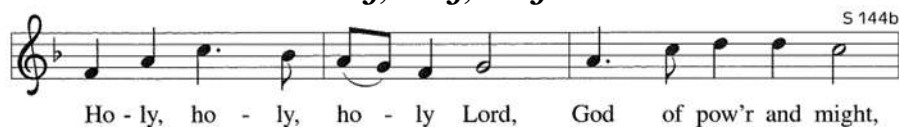
Great Thanksgiving



Great Thanksgiving (*continued*)

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

Holy, Holy, Holy





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.

P: The gifts of God for the people of God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

***Please note: Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available.*

Communion

Lamb of God



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Communion Hymns *I Am the Bread of Life*
Bread of Life from Heaven
Now the Silence

ELW 485
ELW 474
ELW 460

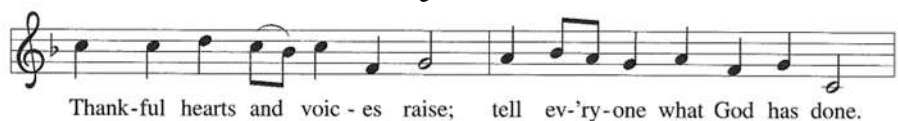
Post-Communion Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

Post-Communion Canticale

Thankful Hearts



Prayer after Communion

A: Let us pray. 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.

C: Amen.

SENDING

Blessing

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

C: Amen.

(continued on next page)

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

C: Amen.

P: The God of grace + bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

Sending Song

I Come with Joy

ELW 482

Dismissal

A: Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C: Thanks be to God.



Bethlehem September 13, 2026
LUTHERAN CHURCH

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

1050 Peninsula Drive
Traverse City, MI 49686
(231) 947-9880
www.bethlehemtc.org

9/13—Shelly Nellist

9/15—Cynthia Cuba

9/16—Jan Stretlien

9/19—Nancy Ammann

Worship Servants for September 13

Preaching & Presiding – Pastor Paul
Busekist

Assisting Minister—Peggy Burns

Lector—Mary Ann Tanis

Musicians: David Husser, Zeke

Clemons, Phil & Denice Bossardet, Pr.
Paul

Today's altar flowers are donated: By
*Bill & Sue Allen in Honor of the
Shepherd Family*

Hospitality—Dan & Laura Hahn

A/V—Paul Ton / Barbara Oster

Cookies/Coffee—Diane Cunningham;
Mary Ann Tanis

Welcome Table—VOLUNTEER

Bell Ringer—Dave Susalski

Front Door Monitor: Tom & Jana
Rockne

Altar Guild—Patty Leibenguth /
Barbara Oster / Mary Ann Tanis

Tech Support—Brian Acker

Counters—Carl Lehto / John Halstead

Choir Rehearsal begins tomorrow, September 14th at 2:30pm in the Sanctuary.
New members are welcome.

Chair Yoga meets at 3:00pm on Mondays. It is \$5 per class. The group will not meet tomorrow, September 14th. Join us next week on September 21st. If anyone has questions or need more info regarding chair yoga they can email betsymorley@charter.net.

The Wednesday Zoom Book/Bible Study will meet ~~not meet~~ on Wednesday, September 16th. We will complete the discussion of *Theo of Golden* on September 23rd. See Pr. Paul or Barbara if you have any questions

Our Third Thursday Service resumes on September 17th starting at 7:00pm. The service will be Holden Evening Prayer with guest Pr. Scott Torkko, Assistant to the Bishop. We have picked the theme of Taco Bar for the Third Thursday meal starting at 5:45pm. Please sign up to bring a contribution to the meal. The service begins at 7:00pm. We hope to see you there.

Sunday School resumes class on September 20th at 9:15am.

Sunday Adult Education will resume on Sunday, September 20th – at 9:15am in the Youth Room.

Renewing Our Foundation Join us after worship on **September 20 or September 27** to learn more about Renewing Our Foundation, Bethlehem Lutheran Church's upcoming capital campaign. We'll share the projects ahead, why these improvements are important, and our vision for strengthening BLC for generations to come. **We encourage all members to attend one session and learn how you can be part of Renewing Our Foundation.**

Grief Group meets the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month from 3:30-4:30 in the gathering space. The next meeting will be September 21st. Any questions contact Peggy Burns 232-392-6913.

New Life Together The team will be meeting on September 21 at 6:00 in the gathering space for a planning meeting. We are looking for more member for the team and would love to have anyone join us!

Where 2 or more are gathered in my name. (Matt 18:20) In our world today there are a lot of things that we need prayer for. Every 4th Tues. starting at 11:00, we will be offering a time and place in church to pray. Please join us. The next date is September 22nd. If any questions, please contact Peggy Burns at 231-392-6913 or cobaltblues2003@yahoo.com

Update for Book Club: We are moving to Tuesday! We will meet 5:30 at Betsy Morley's house on **September 22** to discuss *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans. Contact will be made so you can choose your item for the potluck.

COMMUNION KITS We are missing one of our communion kits used for taking communion to our homebound. Please return it to the sacristy. If any questions please contact Peggy Burns 231-392-6913

Our Monthly Food Pantry collection: The next date is September 27th. If everyone could bring one item, it would go a long way to help us fill the closet to stock the pantry for the month. Donations are accepted anytime during the month and can be placed on the table by the bulletin board in the narthex. Thank you for your support of the outdoor food pantry.